

# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

*or* AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



May 2017

Vol. 122, No. 5

₹ 15.00

# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON

## *Steps to Realisation III*

A great sage once told me that not one in twenty millions in this world believed in God. I asked him why, and he told me, 'Suppose there is a thief in this room, and he gets to know that there is a mass of gold in the next room, and only a very thin partition between the two rooms; what will be the condition of that thief?' I answered, 'He will not be able to sleep at all; his brain will be actively thinking of some means of getting at the gold, and he will think of nothing else.' Then he replied, 'Do you believe that a man could believe in God and not go mad to get him? If a man sincerely believes that there is that immense, infinite mine of Bliss, and that It can be reached, would not that man go mad in his struggle to reach it?' Strong faith in God and the consequent eagerness to reach Him constitute Shraddha. Then comes Samadhana, or constant practice, to hold the mind in God. Nothing is done in a day. Religion cannot be swallowed in the form of a pill. It requires hard and constant practice. The mind can be conquered only by slow and steady practice. Next is Mumukshutva, the intense desire to be free. All the misery we have is of our own choosing; such is our nature. We all have this foolish idea that we can have happiness without misery, and it has taken such possession of us that we have no control over the senses. There are two extremes into which men are running; one is extreme optimism, when everything is rosy



and nice and good; the other, extreme pessimism, when everything seems to be against them. When we are healthy and young, we think that all the wealth of the world will be ours, and when later we get kicked about by society like footballs and get older, we sit in a corner and croak and throw cold water on the enthusiasm of others. Few men know that with pleasure there is pain, and with pain, pleasure; and as pain is disgusting, so is pleasure, as it is the twin brother of pain. Why will not men seek freedom from being played upon? The sage wants liberty; he finds that sense-objects are all vain and that there is no end to pleasures and pains. When a man begins to see the vanity of worldly things, he will feel he ought not to be thus played upon or borne along by nature. That is slavery. When one realizes all this slavery, then comes the desire to be free; an intense desire comes. We have now seen what Mumukshutva, or the desire to be free, is.

From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
(Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2016), 1.397-401.



**Vol. 122, No. 5**  
**May 2017**

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**A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
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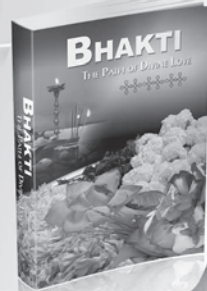
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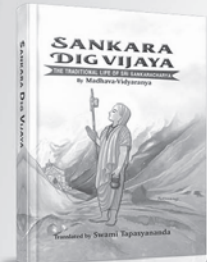
Originally published as the annual number of The Vedanta Kesari, the book explores the rich tradition of Bhakti and different forms of its practice and how one can cultivate it in life.



### **Sankara Dig Vijaya**

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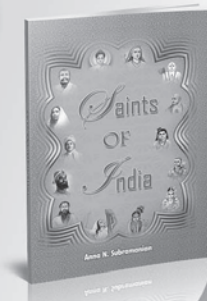
With colourful drawings and a simple and lucid English, the book presents the life of Sri Ramakrishna for young readers.



### **Saints Of India**

Pages: 208 Rs. 65/- Postage: Rs.30/-for single copy.

The book is a compilation of talks given to college students by Sri 'Anna' N.Subramanian. He was a householder-disciple of Swami Shivananda and served for many years in the Ramakrishna Mission educational institutions in Chennai.





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*Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## Maitrayaniya Upanishad

May 2017  
Vol. 122, No. 5

### मैत्रायणीयोपनिषत्

अथान्यात्राप्युक्तं स्वनवत्येषास्यः तनूर्या ओमिति स्त्रीपुन्नपुंसकेति लिङ्गवत्येषाऽथाग्निर्वायु-रादित्या इति भास्वत्येषाथ ब्रह्मा रुद्रो विष्णुरित्यधिपतिवत्येषाथ गार्हपत्यो दक्षिणाग्निराहवनीया इति मुखवत्येषाथ ऋग्यजुः सामेति विज्ञानवत्येषा भूर्भुवः स्वरिति लोकवत्येषाथ भूतं भव्यं भविष्यदिति कालवत्येषाथ प्राणोऽग्निः सूर्या इति प्रतापवत्येषाथान्नमापश्चन्द्रमा इत्याप्ययनवत्येषाऽथ बुद्धिर्मनोऽहङ्कारा इति चेतनवत्येषाथ प्राणोऽपानो व्याना इति प्राणवत्येषेत्यत ओमित्युक्तेनैताः प्रस्तुता अर्चिता अर्पिता भवन्तीत्येवं ह्याहैतद्वै सत्यकाम परञ्चापरञ्च ब्रह्म यदोमित्येतदक्षरमिति । ॥६.५॥

*Athanyatrapy-uktam svanavaty-eshasyah tanurya omi stri-pun-napumsaketi lingavaty-  
esha'thagnir-vayur-aditya iti bhasvaty-esha-atha brahma rudro vishnur-ity-adhipativaty-esha-  
atha garhapatyao dakshinagnir-ahavaniya iti mukhavaty-esha-atha rigyajuh sameti vijnanavaty-  
esha bhurbhuvah svariti lokavaty-esha-atha bhutam bhavyam bhavishyad-iti kalavaty-esha-atha  
prano'gnih surya iti pratapavaty-esha-athannam-apash-chandrama ity-apy-ayanavaty-esha'tha  
buddhir-mano'hamkara iti chetanavaty-esha-atha prano'pano vyana iti pranavaty-esha-ity-ata  
om-ity-uktenaitah prastuta archita arpita bhavantity-evam hy-ahaitad satyakama paran-  
chapan-cha brahma yadomity-etad-aksharamiti.* (6.5)

And then it has been said elsewhere: 'This Om is the sound form of this Self. Feminine, masculine, and neuter are its gender forms. Fire, wind, and sun are its light forms. Brahma, Rudra, and Vishnu are its master forms. The Garhapatya, Dakshinagni, and Ahavaniya sacrificial fires are its mouth forms. Rig, Yajur, and Sama Vedas are his knowledge forms. Earth, atmosphere, and sky are its world forms. Past, present, and future are its time forms. Vital energy, fire, and sun are its heat forms. Food, water, and moon are its growth forms. Understanding, mind, and self are its thought forms. The *prana* breath, the *apana* breath, and the *vyana* breath are its breath forms.' Therefore, by the utterance of Om all these forms are praised, worshipped, and ascribed. For thus it is said: 'This Om, is indeed the higher and the lower Brahman.' (6.5)



# THIS MONTH

**W**HY DO WE SEEK KNOWLEDGE? What is at the root of the desire to know? It is the intrinsic nature of living beings and leads to various emotions and behaviour like curiosity. These questions are explored in **The Desire to Know**.

When Swami Vivekananda visited the US, there was still much stigma based on skin colour. He had to face severe discrimination on this account and was at least once turned away from some hotels. This incident is recounted and the related issues analysed by Diane Marshall, graphic artist and art historian, Missouri, USA in **No Room at the Inn in Baltimore**.

Swami Saradeshananda was an illumined beacon among the disciples of Sri Sarada Devi. His spiritual wisdom and insight have inspired the lives of countless spiritual aspirants. Swami Shuklatmananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Haridwar, served Swami Saradeshananda for ten years from 1978 to 1988 in Vrindavan. He shares with the readers his precious and blissful experiences in the holy company of Swami Saradeshananda in the first instalment of **Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshananda**.

In the fourteenth and concluding instalment of the edited transcript of a series of lectures on **Mandukya Upanishad** given by Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj, who was the thirteenth president of the Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, shows us that the supreme knowledge of Brahman is very difficult to attain and those who do, are adorable.

Swami Sandarshanananda, a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur, Kolkata, in the fifth instalment of **Saga of Epic Proportions**, shows how the work of Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose was beset with many difficulties. He was the victim of nasty politics by those who hated his fame, including some British officials. This article also shows how Swamiji was careful enough to caution Sister Nivedita against too much mixing with particular sections of the Calcutta society lest she should get a wrong idea of India and be discouraged from her work.

Many wonderful nuggets of wisdom contained in ancient scriptures are difficult to understand. In *Balabodha*, such ancient wisdom is made easy. This month's topic is **Karma**. Understanding karma is necessary to understand the various concepts of Indian philosophy.

One needs to be pure to judge others. With an impure mind, one cannot judge others. This is shown in the story **The Strange Throne of Vikramaditya**. This story is this month's *Traditional Tales* and has been translated from the Tamil book *Arulneri Kathaigal*.

Janet Gyatso, Hershey Professor of Buddhist Studies and faculty of the Study of Religion, East Asian Languages and Civilisations, and Inner Asian and Altaic Studies in the Divinity School, at Harvard University has written about the history of Tibetan medicine in **Being Human In A Human World: An Intellectual History of Medicine in Early Modern Tibet**. From this book, we bring you this month's *Manana*.

# *The Desire to Know*

**C**URIOSITY IS INBUILT in every being. Even a tree follows the path of light. It winds its way towards the source of illumination. Light is life. Knowledge is light. We fear ignorance. It makes us incomplete. It unsettles us. Every bit of information that is incomplete leaves us asking for more.

The desire to know is the indicator of our primal ignorance and the confusion that it has created. We have forgotten our true nature and we remember our forgetfulness and not knowing where to search, grapple with the nearest thing that we are clueless of. All inquiries, external or internal, are our attempts to understand our true nature. They are our attempts to understand the source of the entire universe.

It is better to be clear about the distinction between the desire to know and intelligence. To be intelligent is not the same as to be curious. One might be highly intelligent and be satisfied with what one already knows. That person might not have the need to know. The need to know is in many ways a need to use our sense organs. The function of the sense organs or the organs of knowledge is to get knowledge and so they strive constantly to get some knowledge by the means of sound, sight, smell, touch, and taste. When a new sensory knowledge is obtained, the sense organs get bored of it after sometime and run in pursuit of new knowledge. Curiosity is constantly fed by the need for novelty. That is why, anything out of the ordinary, out of place, or out of the normal pattern attracts us so much.

It is very easy to increase the ambit of our

knowledge by constantly, diligently, and actively channelling our curiosity. Instead of simply taking things for granted, we should always ques-

---

**It is better to be in doubt than to be in false certainty. It will lead to a certain truth.**

---

tion things. For instance, if we think something is unexplained in our lives, we should seek answers. We should not give up questioning till we get a complete picture of the problem at hand, and we should continue this process of questioning till we completely get a solution to the problem. Even when there is no problem, we should question to know the nature of things.

One needs to think and analyse every bit of new knowledge one gets. By correlating this new knowledge with the existing knowledge that one has, one can find new meanings of the existing knowledge and arrive at new findings that are not apparently found through the new knowledge. The store of knowledge also increases in this manner and the very process of acquiring fresh knowledge, even in hitherto unknown fields, becomes faster and more nuanced. This is not very different from how knowledge is processed by information systems and how understanding is achieved by artificial intelligence. Thus, by constantly adding the wealth of new information in the context of what one already knows, it is easier to develop an acumen for exploring and acquiring knowledge in almost every moment of life.

Curiosity needs huge quantities of patience. Most of the time, we miss new bits of

knowledge because we lack patience, because we are inattentive, or because we do not have enough time. Do you remember how you hit upon the solution to a puzzle by just looking at it for some time? When poring at a masterpiece, one needs to spend several minutes, sometimes even hours, before unravelling the secret strokes of the artist.

Most people seek knowledge for its utility. We study for earning a livelihood. We read manuals for handling equipment. Some people want to know just for the sake of knowing. Their pursuits are refined. They are fearless in the pursuit of knowledge. Often, how far we are prepared to go defines the boundaries of our wisdom. Mystery instils fear but it also propels the desire to know. If knowing things were as simple as pulling out a book from the shelf, everyone would have known everything. However, we are not given a roadmap for seeking knowledge and all we have is a instinctual desire to know, which if not kindled, dies an early death.

The desire to know can be of two types: existential and intellectual. The existential desire to know is an inbuilt mechanism to keep us alive. On the other hand, the intellectual desire to know is nature's way of making us wiser and stronger. Contrary to popular perception, infants are not always curious. Their curiosity is limited to bouts of non-understanding and helplessness. The infant's desire to know is existential at best. From among these two types of curiosity, which we can also call static curiosity and dynamic curiosity, we need to strive to be dynamically curious. Focus helps one to get a grip on the kind of curiosity one has, yet it is not possible to completely do away with the acquisition of useless knowledge or information.

A routine life is the biggest enemy of curiosity. If one continues to live a monotonous life and gets into the grooves of humdrum routine,

curiosity is killed. Even in spiritual life, it is very important that the aspirant makes a clear plan of spiritual austerities and has milestones to achieve on the spiritual journey. Else, even after years of practice, the spiritual aspirant will be left with no real progress and be disheartened and spiritual life itself would seem meaningless.

That is why it is imperative to experiment in spirituality. One has to measure one's spiritual growth by checking how far one has become free of the vices of the mind and the sense organs.

Curiosity does not look for certainty. It only looks for knowledge, not certain knowledge. Doubt and curiosity are intertwined. Every curious act has a suspicion of knowing the unknown as its basis. Curiosity does not select. One becomes curious of anything that person wants to know but is unable to.

Writers know the power of curiosity and that is why they use 'suspense'. The very possibility that something will remain unknown makes us upset and one goes to great lengths to find out the 'reality'. The need to know is behind all gossip and rumour. So, it is our desire to know that creates so much of misinformation. It is better to be in doubt than to be in false certainty. It will lead to a certain truth. Without focus, mere curiosity leads to anxiety or restlessness.

The desire to know that which is inherent in all beings is nature's way of reminding us that we are wrongly associating ourselves with false identities. Our true identity is the only thing that can completely quench this thirst for knowledge. As there is a natural tendency to fill voids and water flowing nearby flows into a pit, similarly the void of ignorance attracts all kinds of knowledge. If the knowledge of one's true self dawns, then a person will have no more desire to know anything and whatever that person will know further will only be a pointer to the ultimate knowledge of the Self.





# No Room at the Inn in Baltimore

Diane Marshall

IT IS WELL KNOWN that while Swami Vivekananda was in America, he often experienced racial prejudice of varying degrees and manners of expression. One incident in particular stands out: in October 1894 some Baltimore hotels refused to admit him as a guest due to the colour of his skin. This type of racial bar was taken for granted in many parts of the United States during the 1890s—which leads to the question, why did Swamiji's host, Walter Vrooman, put his guest through such indignity? Marie Louise Burke asked this question in *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, and she could only attribute it to youth and inexperience, Walter being six years younger than Swamiji.<sup>1</sup> Certainly Swamiji's older, more parental, hosts would have pre-empted such a situation. In Memphis, the southernmost city that Swamiji visited in January 1894, the Nineteenth Century Club wisely prevailed upon the unconventional Virginia Bethel Moon to accommodate him in her boarding house rather than risk certain refusal at a hotel.

It is worth examining this story forensically as it unfolded in the newspapers to glimpse what was going on in the background.

The first report appeared in the *Baltimore American* on Saturday morning, 13 October. It related that Swamiji 'arrived in Baltimore last night [Friday], and is the guest of Rev. Walter Vrooman.'<sup>2</sup> This interview must have taken place in Union Station, before they went to the hotel. Publicity wise, time was of the essence since Swamiji was due



to speak Sunday evening. Walter and his younger brother, Hiram, had both previously worked as journalists in New York. No doubt they arranged for a reporter to meet Swamiji upon his arrival. The *Baltimore American* described the clothes he travelled in: 'The garb he wore last night was rather of a clerical cut; but he carries with him a costume such as he wears among his people, in India, and it is bright with scarlet and yellow' (ibid.). The *Baltimore American* said nothing about him being turned away from a hotel. It added that Swamiji was 'good-natured', and 'a charming conversationalist'. The paper printed a drawing of him signed by an artist with the initials S K that was copied from Dr John Henry Barrows's book on the Parliament of Religions.<sup>3</sup>

The second report, printed in the *Baltimore News* on the evening of 13, took quite a different tone. Burke rightly called it waggish. The reporter wrote: 'Swami has just come to Baltimore. He arrived last night and put up at an inn near the station, where they invited him to eat salt with them.'<sup>4</sup> This remark sounds facetious—as if it were a foregone conclusion that no 'inn near the station' would have welcomed a non-white foreigner—but the report said nothing specific about him being turned away. Walter must have

## A HIGH PRIEST OF INDIA.

### Swami Vivekananda Arrives in Baltimore—His Views on Religion.

Swami Vivekananda, a Brahmin high priest of India, arrived in Baltimore last night, and is the guest of Rev. Walter Vrooman. He came to America over a year ago, to attend the Congress of Religions, at the World's Fair, in Chicago, and his address before that body made him one of the most popular representatives in the congress. In personal appearance Swami Vivekananda is a picturesque character. He is about five and a half feet tall and heavily built, weighing probably 225 pounds. His skin is dark, but it is the shade peculiar to the Asiatic races. His face is round and plump, and his head is crowned with a

to pass on America is that you have too little religion here. In India they have too much. I think the world would be better if some of India's surplus of religion could be sent over here, while it would be to India's profit if its people could have some of America's industrial advancement and civilization. I am a believer in all religions. I think there is truth in my religion; I think there is truth in your religion. It is the same truth in all religions applying itself through various channels to the same end. I think the great need of the world is less law, and more godly men and women."

The word "Swami" means high priest or cardinal, and indicates Vivekananda's rank, while the latter is his family name. His family record reaches back 2,000 years. He is a member of the highest caste in India, and is counted an equal of the gods of his people, to whom he is

wealth of jet black, wavy hair, that falls on his forehead and reaches down nearly to his eyebrows. His eyes are as black as his hair, and they are bright and sparkling, and when he smiles he displays a set of almost perfect pearly teeth. His countenance is both handsome and striking, and in addition to this, he is as good-natured and jolly as it is possible for a man to be. The garb he wore last night was rather of a clerical cut; but he carries with him a costume such as he wears among his people, in India, and it is bright with scarlet and yellow. Though but thirty-three years of age, he is a profound scholar, and can fluently speak seven languages, and can read as many more. His English is beyond criticism.

To an American reporter last night Swami Vivekananda said: "I have been very favorably impressed with American institutions during my stay in this country. My time has been divided between four cities—Chicago, New York, Boston and Detroit. I never heard of Chicago when in India, but I had frequently heard of Baltimore. The main criticism I have

an object of worship. His religion is Hinduism. His address at the Congress of Religions at Chicago last year was a profound production, and made a great impression on all who heard or read it.

Swami Vivekananda, during his stay in America, has been studying American institutions, particularly the American mode of government. He favors the establishment in this country of an international university, where all the religions of the world can be taught, for, he thinks, there is no more need of American missionaries going to India than there is of Indian missionaries coming to America.

Swami Vivekananda is a charming conversationalist. He is familiar with the works of all the great writers in a dozen different tongues, and he quotes long selections from Spencer, Darwin, Mill or others of the great philosophers with a fluency that is surprising. Tomorrow evening he will appear on the stage of the Lyceum Theater in conjunction with the three Vrooman brothers, and will deliver an address. He will wear the costume of his native country.

persuaded him that he knew 'nothing of such questions as ... the race problem,' but he 'is, however, posted on Oriental immigration, and says the United States has no right to bar out the Chinese. He says the law of love must prevail and force must yield. He predicts the downfall of any nation that uses force. He says also that the United States should open her doors to the world' (ibid.).<sup>5</sup> The noted 'admirer group of porters' were African American, of course.

Leaving no stone unturned, the publicity-conscious Vroomans contacted a third journalist from the *Morning Herald*. This report, which ran Sunday, 14, began:

'Seated in the main lobby of the Hotel Rennert yesterday afternoon was a personage clad in a maroon dressing gown, bound with a red sash. ... He was the observed of all observers.'<sup>6</sup> Comparing the *News* to the *Herald* reveals a marked difference in sympathy by the adjectives used to describe Swamiji. The *News* wrote: 'He is a fleshy man of the swarthy, Asiatic complexion and shiny-black hair.'<sup>7</sup> Whereas the *Herald* wrote: 'His face was dark, and mystically dignified, its lineaments expressive at once of both intellectuality and sentiment.'<sup>8</sup> The *Herald* article was based upon separate interviews with Hiram and Swamiji: 'Rev. Hiram Vrooman was seen at his residence, 1122 North Calvert Street, yesterday, and talked freely in reference to the visit of the distinguished guest' (ibid.). It contained erroneous statements about Swamiji from Hiram, but said nothing about him being turned away from a hotel.

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summoned this journalist on Saturday morning because he was present when Hiram arrived to fetch Swamiji just before noon. He recorded that Swamiji changed from his black clerical coat to his ochre and maroon lecture robes—no doubt at Hiram's request—and the reporter accompanied them to the Hotel Rennert at the corner of Saratoga and Liberty streets, where Swamiji 'was introduced to the clerk, to whom he did humble obeisance and who handed him a pen' (ibid.). Then: 'He was shown to his room by one of an admiring group of porters who had assembled and gave audience there in the flaming red cloak to a reporter for *The News*' (ibid.). The said reporter must have been as annoying in person as he was flippant on the page. Several times Swamiji diverted his provocative questions on social issues to more congenial matters. Swamiji



To recap, three newspapers interviewed Swamiji after his arrival in Baltimore on the evening of 12, and not one of their initial reports mentioned a hotel refusing him. The *American* article was congenial. The *News* was jocular, laced with veiled racism. The *Herald* was liberal and receptive. It appears that Walter, dissatisfied, took matters into his own hands and contacted the *American* again. On 14, the *American*

printed Walter's account of what transpired the night Swamiji arrived in Baltimore. This story, 'Showed Him the Door', found by Asim Chaudhuri, gives important details.<sup>9</sup>

It explains that both Hiram and Walter met Swamiji and an unnamed female musician at Union Depot.<sup>10</sup> The brothers accompanied them to a nearby hotel where Walter had made reservations. The hotel clerk accepted the lady, but not Swamiji, using the excuse that only one reservation had been made and therefore he did not have room. To analyse this story, the 1890 Sanborn map shows two hotels—and there may have been more—just across the bridge from Union Station on North Charles Street: the St Charles Hotel and the Densch Hotel. The *American* stated that after the impasse at the hotel and considering the late hour, Swamiji spent the night at Walter's abode. Both Hiram and Walter, being single men of slender means, probably rented rooms in houses. Hiram,

a pastor, lived in a residential neighbourhood, but Carl, the youngest brother, was probably already staying with him. Walter preferred to live amongst the labouring classes.<sup>11</sup> His address at 108 East Franklin Street was in a more industrial area.<sup>12</sup> Swamiji did not mind humble accommodations. He did not mind spending the night on the sofa—if there was a sofa. The next day, Hiram

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## A WISE MAN AMONG US.

### VISIT OF A DISTINGUISHED HINDOO PRIEST TO THIS CITY.

He is a Guest of the Vrooman Brothers and is Interested in the Establishment of an International University of Religions—His Gorgeous Garb.

SEATED in the main lobby of the Hotel Kennert yesterday afternoon was a personage clad a maroon dressing-gown, bound with a red sash. His face was dark, and mystically dignified, its lineaments expressive at once of both intellectuality and sentiment. His complexion was a deep olive, his eyes large, black and luminous, his hair black as midnight, his brow a study for the physiognomist. Taken all in all, his head was such a one as would delight the believer in phrenology.

The man was Swami Vivekananda, the Brahmin high priest, whose arrival has created such a furore in local religious circles. He was the observed of all observers. In his hand he held a copy of a leading magazine, which he was perusing with interest. Mr. Vivekananda conversed with a SUNDAY HERALD reporter, speaking English with ease and with an accent similar to that of an educated Italian. He displayed the greatest familiarity with the institutions of this country, religious, political and social.

Mr. Vivekananda came to Baltimore at the invitation of the Vrooman brothers, Hiram, Carl and Weller, and while in this city will be their guest. Rev. Hiram Vrooman was seen at his residence, 1122 North Calvert street, yesterday, and talked freely in reference to the visit of the distinguished guest.

"Mr. Vivekananda," he said, "is one of the most intelligent men I have ever met. He came to this city at our invitation, and while here will confer with us in reference to the founding of the international university, which it is proposed to establish as an outcome of the World's Congress of Religions, which was such an interesting feature of the World's Fair. This university is one of Mr. Vivekananda's pet ideas, and has the full sympathy of myself and my brothers, and also a number of gentlemen of wealth and position, including several religions. Among its promoters are members of the Roman Catholic and Hebrew religions. The idea of the university is education in general religion.

"When founded its head will be one of the most distinguished educators in the country, and its faculty will include professors selected

from all religions. Mr. Vivekananda was sent to this country by the ecclesiastics of the Buddhist religion in India to study our religious and political systems. His expenses are paid by the ecclesiastical authorities of the Buddhist faith. He was its representative at the World's Congress. One of Mr. Vivekananda's ideas in the establishing of the university is that it may serve to educate a superior kind of missionary for work in India. While he is steadfast to his own religious belief, he wishes that the present system of sending ignorant men as missionaries to India may be discontinued and men sent there who can teach the Christian religion from an elevated standpoint. In this wish he is animated only by a desire for the good of general religion.

"He is one of the widest-informed men on religious topics I ever knew. It may be of interest to Roman Catholics to know that he was the first man to translate the works of Thomas à Kempis, the great theologian of their faith, the favorite philosopher of Pope Leo, into the Sanscrit tongue. He carries a volume of the works of St. Thomas about with him constantly.

"Mr. Vivekananda has told me that his father was a great believer in the Lord Jesus, as he called him, and that when a boy he had read in the Gospel of St. John the thrilling description of the crucifixion of the Savior and wept over it. He will remain in this city for several weeks. To-morrow evening he will deliver a brief address at our meeting at the Lyceum, and on Sunday week will speak at length at our second meeting on the university plan.

"I can say relative to the university that it is to be located near Boston, and that a meeting to give it definite shape will be held soon. Mr. Vivekananda will not leave this country until it is established. He does not receive money from any one or eat meat, both being against the laws governing this caste. Before becoming a priest he had studied English law in India."

### To Decorate Elk Graves.

For the first time in the history of Baltimore Lodge of Elks the graves of their deceased members buried in the Elks' Rest at Lorraine Cemetery, will be decorated with flowers, and appropriate services held under the direction of the officers of the lodge. Music will be given by the Elks' Quartette next Wednesday afternoon. While there are quite a number of Elks buried in the rest, it was not until recently that the lodge was called upon to bury one of its own members. On Sunday, December 2, memorial service will take place at the Academy of Music, which will be open to the public.

### Incorporated With \$25,000 Stock.

The Fridgen-Herndon Shoe Company was incorporated yesterday by John I. Fridgen, Roberdean Annan, Arthur B. Chancellor, Edmund W. Herndon and Thomas J. Copeland. The capital stock is placed at \$25,000, divided into 250 shares of a par value of \$100. The company will carry on a wholesale shoe business.



## SHOWED HIM THE DOOR.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S EXPERIENCE AT LOCAL HOTELS.

The Dark Skin of the Great Brahmin High Priest Bars Him From the Pertals of Some Houses, but He Is Made Very Welcome at Rennert's—Mr. Vrooman Is Indignant. A Schooner Capsized and Two of the Crew Drowned—Burial of an Old Grand Army Man.

Swami Vivekananda, the famous high priest of India, who arrived in Baltimore Friday night, and who is the guest of Rev. Walter Vrooman, as stated in The American yesterday, is staying at the Hotel Rennert. He was accepted there as a guest without the slightest hesitancy—indeed, the management was glad to have under its roof a hostelry of men renowned in art, in letters, in business—this man of the Orient who is known the world over. Not so, however, at other hotels where application was made for accommodations, and Mr. Vrooman is highly indignant that the distinguished visitor should have been, as he says, turned away. Swami Vivekananda is very dark skinned, and to this fact is due the whole trouble. "To think," exclaimed Mr. Vrooman in the heat of his anger, "of a hotel-keeper turning from his door a man who was the first to translate the works of Thomas a-Kempis into the Sanskrit tongue and spread it through the East Indian nations!"

In explanation of the case, Mr. Vrooman said: "A couple of weeks ago I called at a hotel in the northern part of the city and asked the manager if he could furnish accommodations for a young lady musician and for Swami Vivekananda. The manager said he could accommodate them. Immediately after the arrival of Swami Vivekananda at Union Station on Friday night I, in company with my brother, took him to the hotel. Then the manager told me he had reserved a room for the young lady, but that he had no room for the high priest. As the hour was rather late to look for other quarters, Vivekananda spent the night with me."

The manager of the hotel in question says that he thinks Mr. Vrooman is in error. He did not refuse to accommodate Vivekananda on account of his dark color, he says, for, as he is a man of high rank, he would have been glad to have had him stop at the house. "When Mr. Vrooman engaged the room for the lady musician," said the manager, "he did not say positively that the high priest would be here, and I, consequently, did not reserve a room. As my hotel is small and crowded, I had no room to spare last night. Mr. Vrooman is mistaken if he thinks I refused to give his guest a room on account of his color, when I knew that he was not an African."

Yesterday morning Rev. Hiram Vrooman, pastor of New Jerusalem Church and a brother of Rev. Walter Vrooman, started out to find quarters for his brother's guest. He went to first-class hotels in the center of the city. At the first one he explained to the clerk who Swami Vivekananda was, and asked if he could board him during his stay in this city. The clerk refused to let him stop at the house, giving as a reason that, as the hotel had a good many patrons from the South, some of them might become offended by seeing in the hotel a man whom they might mistake for a negro. The same condition of affairs was met with at the other hotel. Mr. Vrooman then went to the Rennert, where Swami Vivekananda was welcomed. The distinguished visitor is receiving a great deal of attention. His bright, picturesque costume attracts notice wherever he goes. He will speak at the Lyceum Theater tonight.

## Prabuddha Bharata

set out to find better quarters for Swamiji and was declined at two 'first-class hotels in the center of the city'.<sup>13</sup>

It seems that Hiram acted alone—contrary to what was abridged later in the *Sun*: 'Walter Vrooman took him to four hotels'.<sup>14</sup> Swamiji does not seem to have suffered this charade in the *American* account. Once Hiram secured admission at the third hotel, the Rennert, he made sure that Swamiji arrived dressed in his lecturing robes—which proclaimed him a foreigner and by default not an African American.

According to Walter's story, the manager of the hotel near the station assured him that he would reserve a room for Swamiji; but Walter's trust seems incongruous with his extensive experience of social bigotry. When he was a social activist in Philadelphia he had teamed up with Rabbi Krauskopf, a settlement leader, and experienced Christian rejection of his housing

improvement proposals because he was working with a Jew. So, no, Walter was not naïve. His biographer, Harlan Phillips, wrote that while in the City of Brotherly Love, Walter's 'moral bubble had been pricked by a thorn of bigotry'.<sup>15</sup> Even so, the economy of accommodating the Swami as cheaply as the musician may have warped Walter's better judgement of the social realities of Baltimore. To give the hotel manager a slim benefit of doubt, he said that when Walter made the reservation two weeks in advance, 'he did not say positively that the high priest would be here'.<sup>16</sup> Uncertainty may have been a factor. There was no mention of Swamiji in the four paid advertisements for the 'Religion of Action' appearing in the *Sun* prior to 14. The earliest extant letter of Swamiji's that mentions his going to Baltimore was postmarked 10 October 1894.<sup>17</sup> Perhaps he did not give a firm answer to the Vroomans' invitation until the end of the first week of October. The hotel clerk's claim that he had no vacancies was a generic excuse for discrimination, of course, and if he had been truly unprejudiced, as was claimed, a room would have been found. Yet it is just possible that Walter became angry to cover his embarrassment at not making better plans or, Walter had an ulterior motive.

I can imagine that the brothers had differing reactions to the hotel's rebuff on the night of 12: Hiram profusely apologising to Swamiji and promising to find him better quarters the next morning, whilst Walter fumed and waxed indignant at the inequalities of the world. No doubt Swamiji was imperturbable, as the 1914 edition of the *Life of the Swami Vivekananda* observed: 'The Swami invariably received rude remarks and rude glances with something one might have called a spiritual hauteur and a grand indifference. What was race-prejudice to him who saw in every man his brother?'<sup>18</sup> Walter was too much of a hot head, however, to comprehend a deeper meaning for Swamiji's behaviour.





## LESS DOCTRINE, MORE BREAD.

### The Words of the High Priest of India—A Meeting at the Lyceum.

The Lyceum Theater was crowded last night at the first of a series of meetings by the Vrooman Brothers. The subject discussed was "Dynamic Religion." The story of David and Goliath was discussed by Rev. Hiram Vrooman, Mr. Carl Vrooman and Rev. Walter Vrooman. In the course of his remarks, Rev. Hiram Vrooman said the most popular preachers today were generally those who manifest the greatest ingenuity in arranging the lights in the heavens without disturbing the darkness that is gathered over the church pews and over the city. "We are," said he, "in a crisis of the world's history. If shot and shell were breaking the air and brass bands playing war marches, I would not be a particle more interested in what daily transpires than I am now in these times of apparent peace, when the great movements are developing which are to bless or curse the millions of our race who are yet to live."

Mr. Carl Vrooman followed. In the course of his remarks, he said: "What we need is less of that cowardice which calls itself humility, and less of that trust which lolls in luxurious plety, while Lazarus and his million brothers are starving and sinning within easy reach, trusting that in his own good time and way God will provide."

Rev. Walter Vrooman said: "Dynamic religion means religion in motion, and is opposed to that religion at rest which is locked up in the hundreds of huge stone buildings scattered throughout our cities, during the whole week, with the exception of a couple of hours, during which time the people are allowed to go in and nibble at it as though it had a sort of a medicinal effect in easing the pains caused by conscience."

Swami Vivekananda, the high priest from India, was the last speaker. He spoke briefly, and was listened to with marked attention. His English and his mode of delivery were excellent. There is a foreign accent to his syllables, but not enough to prevent him from being plainly understood. He was dressed in the costume of his native country, which was decidedly picturesque. He said he could speak but briefly after the oratory that had preceded him, but he could add his endorsement to all that had been said. He had traveled a great deal, and preached to all kinds of people. He had found that the particular kind of doctrine preached made little difference. What is wanted is practical sort of work. If such ideas could not be carried out, he would lose his faith in humanity. The cry all over the world is "less doctrine and more bread." He thought the sending of missionaries to India all right; he had no objections to offer, but he thought it would be better to send fewer men and more money. So far as India was concerned, she had religious doctrine to spare. Living up to the doctrines was needed more than more doctrines. The people of India, as well as the people all over the world, had been taught to pray, but prayer with the lips was not enough; people should pray with their hearts. "A few people in the world," he said, "really try to do good. Others look on and applaud, and think that they themselves have done great good. Life is love, and when a man ceases to do good to others, he is dead spiritually."

On Sunday evening next Swami Vivekananda will make the address of the evening at the Lyceum.

that American women should be allowed to vote. Although Swamiji maintained his 'imperturbable countenance', he supposedly thrust one barb, saying he was impressed with 'the unusual prevalence of ignorance in the South' (ibid.).

Walter and Hiram probably favoured the *Baltimore News*. Its owner, Charles H Grasty, a former *Kansas City Star* editor, had a mission to combat political corruption. Regrettably, in their effort to protest overt racism, the Vroomans' subjected Swamiji to a more insidious sort of racism. It was a greater trial for Swamiji to deal with the *News* man than the hotel clerk. Several months later, responding to a query from India, Swamiji called the news reports from Baltimore 'fabulous nonsense', exclaiming: 'American newspapers write anything they like about anybody!!!'<sup>26</sup>

While Hiram took Swamiji to the Rennert, Walter must have used that time to contact a reporter from the *American*, and vent his version of the hotel incident. The resulting article, 'Showed Him the Door', appeared at the top of page 8 in the Sunday morning edition, just in time to remind readers that Swamiji 'will speak at the Lyceum Theater tonight.'<sup>27</sup>

The event for which Swamiji came to Baltimore, a rally held by the Vrooman brothers at the Lyceum Theatre on North Charles Street for their 'Religion of Action' campaign, took place on Sunday evening, 14. The next day it was reviewed in at least three papers. The *American* article, 'Less Doctrine, More Bread', did not repeat any part of its preceding story about being turned away from hotels.<sup>28</sup> The *Herald* wrote the longest column, but also did not mention the hotel matter. The previously mentioned *Sun* article that claimed 'Walter Vrooman took him to four hotels', briefly noted Swamiji's difficulty due to his 'bronze skin', but seemed reluctant to magnify any further embarrassment to the fair city of Baltimore.<sup>29</sup>



Did Walter dare to show Swamiji the 'Showed Him the Door' article before the Lyceum event? He surely saw through Walter's desire for notoriety. The *Sun* said that Swamiji 'sat on the stage with imperturbable stolidity until it came his turn to speak. Then his manner changed and he spoke with force and feeling' (ibid.). And he advised: 'Do good by helping others without ulterior motives' (ibid.).

So what effect did the *American's* story about refusing Swamiji a room have on the white citizens of Baltimore? Next to nil. A letter to the editor in the *Morning Herald* on 17 October criticised instead the Vrooman brothers' political approach to religion in their speeches, saying that it was easy to find fault with the existing order of things. The writer observed, however: 'The most common-sense man of this quartette is no doubt the "Reverend from the Antipodes". His "more money and less men, more actions and less doctrines" is a good lesson to our missionary cranks. I suppose in his further lectures he will clearly define the fact that there is more field for good missionaries in this country than anywhere else, which, after all, is not as bad as this trio of Vroomans try to paint it.'<sup>30</sup>

What effect did Swamiji's support lend to the Vroomans' 'Religion of Action' campaign? He filled the house. The *Morning Herald* described the meeting on Sunday, 21: 'An audience which filled the Lyceum Theatre from pit to dome assembled last night at the second of the series of meetings held by the Vrooman Brothers in the interests of "Dynamic Religion". Fully 3,000 persons were present. ... His [Swamiji's] personality seemed to be the feature of the evening.'<sup>31</sup>

Burke wrote that on 22, the *News* gave 'abundant space to the long-winded, electioneering Vrooman brothers', but she did not quote that story, preferring the account given by the *American*.<sup>32</sup> In that report, 'The Religion of

Buddha', Swamiji gave Baltimore a remedy for social justice, saying: 'The cause of evil is our desire to be superior to others and our selfishness.'<sup>33</sup> The *American* gave most of its space to the content of Swamiji's speech, despatching the Vrooman brothers in one sentence at the end. The *Sun*, however, accorded Swamiji only one

## RELIGION OF ACTION.

As Expounded to Another Large Crowd at the Lyceum Theatre.

The Lyceum Theatre was crowded last night at a meeting held in the cause of dynamic religion, or the religion of action.

Addresses were made by Rev. Hiram Vrooman, Rev. Walter Vrooman and also by Swami Vivekananda, the Hindoo high priest, who spoke of "The Social Aspects of Buddhism." The speakers were frequently applauded.

Said Rev. Hiram Vrooman: "We stand for the broadest and most fundamental reforms, but our labors will always be confined to those practical problems that immediately confront us. And now in starting, if we find that our first obstruction is a forest of political corruption, let us not hesitate one moment to swing the axe and clear away the woods."

Rev. Walter Vrooman said: "A gentleman who attended our last Sunday night's meeting, when asked what he thought of it, said that it was very interesting, but a great mistake was made in mixing with politics. I wish to say that to mix religion with politics is what we are here for. Our critic thinks applied Christianity is interesting so long as it isn't applied to anything; that dynamic religion is good if we only leave off the dynamic. A carpenter might just as well attempt to purchase a measuring square and ask for a round and smooth one without a sharp corner as for any man to seek for true religion that does not interfere with the important affairs of human life.

"And let me say further, in all solemnity, that when in one of the greatest cities of America there is a false registration of voters winked at by those in authority, lawmakers elected who misrepresent their constituents and aldermen chosen who give public franchises to friends for less than their value, then I say that at least one divine spark from above should be brought down and mixed with Baltimore politics."



## PUBLIC OPINION.

It Is Easy to Find Fault.

To the Editor of *The Morning Herald*:

As last Sunday's lectures delivered by the Messrs. Vrooman are given such prominence in the columns of the daily papers of this city, and anticipating that the next three lectures will be rendered not only in the same strain, but result in the same publicity, you are requested, "by one for many," to publish in your valuable medium the following, with the purpose of reminding these gentlemen that, as much as Baltimore people appreciate good lectures, they cannot result in the enthusiasm intended by the quartette of lecturers as long as they choose to place the blame of existing political and social evils at the doors of Democratic leaders of Democratic communities. The lectures of these three brothers show an unusual lack of originality and personal experience.

It must be admitted that they are able to repeat in an acceptable manner what they have heard shortly before, but that is all, and no more.

Rev. Walter Vrooman's statement of the good work Dr. Parkhurst has done in New York City may only be taken as a statement of matters, but impossible as a statement of facts.

What a good specimen to the theory of Darwin is the one who propounds the work of that "nervous man with reddish whiskers" as good.

Two years ago houses of ill-fame were to be found in certain quarters of the metropolis only. Dr. Parkhurst managed it that those districts that respectable men and women used to shun are cleared of those places. But where are they now? Where? In tenement-houses that are occupied by 20 families with about 60 children collectively. Children—poor, innocent souls—the very ones who, in any crusades of that kind, ought to be considered first and last, are the very ones who have at present the opportunity to see things and hear languages and watch manners which ruins their innocent minds and their happy childish illusions of the doings in this world.

Rev. Walter Vrooman can only refer to this fact as a result of the work of Dr. Parkhurst, and if he endeavors to rally good Baltimoreans around him for work with such results he'll get badly left. This "nervous man with reddish whiskers" undertook to create a chaos, but, by no means, did he even attempt to show how to bring proper order about. To run down men and institutions is an extremely easy task, and can be done by anybody.

These same advices we had opportunity to hear at the Lyceum last Sunday were heard before. But times have changed since, and thinking people have formed their conclusions.

Any man who preaches and teaches the words and laws of God, and who, in the same breath, uses the words "aespise" and "enemy" as attributes for his fellow-men cannot possibly be a servant of Him who loveth even His enemies.

The most common-sense man of this quartette is no doubt the "Reverend from the Antipodes." His "more money and less men, more actions and less doctrines" is a good lesson to our missionary cranks. I suppose in his further lectures he will clearly define the fact that there is more field for good missionaries in this country than anywhere else, which, after all, is not as bad as this trio of Vroomans try to paint it.

A little more optimism and considerable less pessimism would be a good prescription for the three brothers lecturing at the Lyceum.

BALTIMORE, Oct. 16.

"ONE FOR MANY."

Prabuddha Bharata

sentence and filled its space with Walter's response to a criticism of his politicised view of religion: 'I wish to say that to mix religion with politics is what we are here for.'<sup>34</sup> Did Walter listen to the words Swamiji had just uttered? The *Herald* caught Swamiji's passion: 'So long as society tries to cure human selfishness by laws and institutions whose aim is to force others to do good to their neighbors, nothing can be done. ... He [Buddha] believed that man must go to work and help others; find his soul in others; find his life in others. He believed that in the conjunction of doing good to others as the only good we do ourselves.'<sup>35</sup> By the time Swamiji's personality shone forth with the egalitarian, unselfish message of Buddha, any perception

of him as a victim of racism—requiring the chastising indignation of Walter Vrooman—was extinguished in Baltimore.

But that was not the end of it elsewhere. Between 1890 and 1892 Walter had been a journalist for *The World*, the largest newspaper in New York City, run by Joseph Pulitzer.<sup>36</sup> He understood how news was distributed by press associations via telegraph. On 15, the Baltimore hotel story was on the front page of *The World* with the byline, 'Special to *The World*'. It also ran in *The Sun* and the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. Swamiji's friends in New York City, particularly the Guernseys, were no doubt upset. Walter also had many connections in Boston. The article ran twice in the *Boston Daily Globe* on 15—on pages 2 and 18. Sara Bull was disturbed when she read it. It also appeared in the *Chicago Inter Ocean* and twice in the *Chicago Tribune*. The Hales must have been concerned.

What did Walter Vrooman unleash? The story went viral nationwide. Headlines from coast to coast read: 'He Wasn't White Enough'; 'He Was Too Dark'; 'Denied Him Quarters'; 'A Joke on Vivekananda'; 'High Priest Refused Lodgings, Noted Indian Scholar Looks Too Much Like a Negro'; 'Hotels Refused Him'; 'Turned the Priest Away'; 'Baltimore Hotels Didn't Care to Entertain'; 'Because He Was Dark', and so on. Gopal Stavig found a sympathetic statement in an African American newspaper: 'Should Christ appear in Baltimore as he did in Palestine he would probably not only be refused at hotels but be rejected from the leading churches of that caste-bound city.'<sup>37</sup> Editorial licence with this story varied from lofty to low. Chaudhuri found the hotel story in the *Oakland Tribune* altered to incorporate the n-word twice.<sup>38</sup>

It would seem that through his press connections, Walter supported the spread of this sensational story in order to promote his own

righteous indignation. The strongest indication that he was behind it stems from its prevalence in newspapers across Kansas, the Vrooman's home state. While the story varied somewhat in headline and content nationwide, at least a dozen press accounts in the small newspapers of Kansas were identical.<sup>39</sup> The end result of Walter's purported indignation was that Swamiji won a place in history alongside thousands of other men and women who were barred from public access due to the colour of their skin.

Swamiji got immediate feedback about the hotel incident from Sara Bull in Boston, and he probably heard from New York and Chicago as well. I rather doubt that he knew or cared that the story had spread coast to coast. Trying to be sympathetic and helpful, Mrs Bull sent him an introduction to Frederick Douglass in Washington. He replied: 'Many thanks for your kindness in sending me the introduction to Mr. Frederic Douglass. You need not be sorry on account of the ill-treatment I received at the hands of a low class hotel-keeper at Baltimore. It was the fault of the Vrooman brothers. Why should they take me to a low hotel?'<sup>40</sup>

There is no record that Swamiji actually contacted Douglass.<sup>41</sup> While I think he would have wanted to meet Douglass because he was a revered champion of freedom, I feel sure he would never have mentioned his hotel denial to the great old man.<sup>42</sup> By nineteenth century standards it was a minor racial insult. This was an era when news articles about lynchings in the South were commonplace. Racial prejudice was a shadow Swamiji lived with; he understood its myriad presentations very well. He wrote from England in 1895: 'That wonderful knowledge of the Americans that identify every black man with the negro is entirely absent here, and nobody even stares at me in the street.'<sup>43</sup> His choice *not* to acknowledge racial discrimination at

times was part of his tapasya to rise above maya altogether.

Unfortunately, Walter's protest was itself complicit with racism. His point was that Swamiji should not have been treated like a Negro. He did not protest how Negroes were treated.<sup>44</sup> Swamiji's status as a foreign visitor and a celebrity usually allowed him a discreet loophole in racial barriers amongst educated society in America. In Memphis, for example, Judge Morgan prefaced Swamiji's lecture at the Auditorium with the rationale that he was really an Aryan.<sup>45</sup> He understood the artificiality of this distinction and its implied racial hierarchy. Bias was unconsciously lodged even in the minds of some of his friends who asked why he did not tell bigots who he was—as if that would have made any difference. Bigotry is seldom persuaded. To this, Swamiji replied straight from his heart: 'What! ... Rise at the expense of another? I didn't come to earth for that!'<sup>46</sup>

Swamiji reassured Mrs. Bull: 'And then the American women, as everywhere, came to my rescue, and I had a very good time.'<sup>47</sup>

The Rennert was an expensive hotel and because Swamiji wrote several letters during the week between his two Lyceum talks from 1123 St Paul Street, it has been inferred that he moved from the hotel to stay on St Paul Street as a guest of George W Grafflin, a wealthy fertilizer manufacturer, and his daughter, Anne.<sup>48</sup> Anne Landstreet Grafflin may have been one of the American women who 'rescued'





### THE RELIGION OF BUDDHA.

#### Swami Vivekananda's Address at the Lyceum Theater.

The Lyceum Theater was crowded to the doors last night at the second meeting of the series conducted by the Vrooman brothers on "Dynamic Religion." Swami Vivekananda, of India, made the principal address. He spoke on the Buddhist religion, and told of the evils which existed among the people of India at the time of the birth of Buddha. The social inequalities in India, he said, were at that period a thousand times greater than anywhere else in the world. "Six hundred years before Christ," he continued, "the priesthood of India exercised great influence over the minds of the people, and between the upper and nether millstone of intellectuality and learning the people were ground. Buddhism, which is the religion of more than two-thirds of the human family, was not founded as an entirely new religion, but rather as a reformation which carried off the corruption of the times. Buddha seems to have been the only prophet who did everything for others and absolutely nothing for himself. He gave up his home and all the enjoyments of life to spend his days in search of the medicine for the terrible disease of human misery. In an age when men and priests were discussing the essence of the deity, he discovered what people had overlooked, that misery existed. The cause of evil is our desire to be superior to others and our selfishness. The moment that the world becomes unselfish all evil will vanish. So long as society tries to cure evil by laws and institutions, evil will not be cured. The world has tried this method ineffectually for thousands of years. Force against force never cures, and the only cure for evil is unselfishness. We need to teach people to obey the laws rather than to make more laws. Buddhism was the first missionary religion of the world, but it was one of the teachings of Buddhism not to antagonize any other religion. Sects weaken their power for good by making war on each other."

Revs. Hiram and Walter Vrooman also spoke.

Baltimore American, 22 October 1894, 8

Swamiji this time. After her father died in November 1896, Walter courted her and she married him in February 1897.<sup>49</sup> It was Hiram, however, who first became acquainted with the Grafflins. From 1892 to 1893 he had been the interim pastor at the Associate Reformed Church where they attended. Hiram founded a civic organisation, the Union for Public Good. Anne was corresponding

secretary and Hiram was recording secretary.<sup>50</sup> The Grafflin home was on the opposite side of the block to Hiram's residence at 1122 Calvert Street. In 1894 Hiram was pastor of the New Jerusalem church on Calvert Street near Chase.

There were two other occasions that week when Swamiji was kept busy. On 16, Mrs Colville and Miss Young took him sightseeing in Washington D C, while Hiram attended a conference there.<sup>51</sup> On 20, the *American* reported on the closing ceremonies of the Alpha Phi fraternity convention held at the Woman's College on St Paul Street. Someone—possibly a student from the University of Minnesota—invited him to their evening reception at Goucher Hall.<sup>52</sup> "The fraternity had as their guest Swami Vivekananda, the great high priest of Hindu, who speaks tomorrow night at the Lyceum Theater. He received much attention."<sup>53</sup>

These were the events in Baltimore that were reported in the press between 13 and 22 October. There is much to analyse and consider, but first two basic questions arise. Who were the Vroomans and how did Swamiji meet them?

Judge Hiram Perkins Vrooman and Sarah Buffington Vrooman had six sons: Frank B, Harry C, Walter W, Hiram G, Carl S, and Roy B—who was only ten in 1894.<sup>54</sup> The three brothers that Swamiji met were born in Macon, Missouri. The family moved to Kansas where Judge Vrooman ran as the Greenback candidate for governor in 1880, so politics was in the boys' blood. The brothers all attended Washburn College in Topeka for at least a year before moving on to other places. Throughout their lives they maintained loyal fraternal solidarity, but they all travelled widely and lived scattered apart. They were ardent advocates for social reform and frequently collaborated. According to historian Ross Paulson: 'On two points all the Vrooman brothers were in agreement: social problems



arise from selfishness in man, and selfishness is caused by an unfavorable environment.<sup>55</sup>

Exactly how Swamiji met the Vroomans is not known, but there are three probable occasions. One possibility is that Carl heard Swamiji speak to the Harvard Religious Union at Sever Hall on 17 May 1894.<sup>56</sup> Carl was a student at Harvard and president of the intercollegiate debating union; therefore he had a keen appreciation for a man who could think on his feet. Walter was in Boston at that time agitating labour groups.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps Carl told Walter about Swamiji's eloquence and nonsectarian message and Walter, always one to act upon the moment, called on him at the Bellevue Hotel. I very much doubt that Walter would have been invited to Sara Bull's house in Cambridge. The second eldest brother, Harry Chase Vrooman, was a minister in East Milton, near Boston. Harry was at Greenacre in July 1894.<sup>58</sup> It is not known if he met Swamiji then, but Benjamin Orange Flower, the editor of *The Arena*, was also at Greenacre. All the brothers wrote for that magazine and knew Flower well. Flower's wife, Hattie, was one of the 'scientific dress' advocates that Swamiji mentioned in a letter, so the Flowers may have introduced him to the Vroomans.<sup>59</sup> During September he moved about Boston independently, speaking to small groups, and he met people from a variety of progressive persuasions. Walter, Harry, and Carl all spoke at a union meeting in Boston on 25 September.<sup>60</sup> Walter may have called on Swamiji who was once again staying at the Bellevue hotel, and issued the invitation to Baltimore.<sup>61</sup> Hiram had been working as a pastor in Baltimore since 1892. It seems that Hiram knew little about Swamiji before his arrival in Baltimore—which is perhaps why he told the *Herald* that Swamiji was a Buddhist.

During the period that Swamiji knew them, the Vrooman brothers were engaged in formulating a new theology for their social gospel (97). He became the drawing card that helped them

launch their 'Religion of Action' campaign, a joint venture by Harry, Walter, Hiram, and Carl that lasted until February 1895. Naturally he must have enjoyed their idealism, youthful energy, and their contagious, can-do attitude. He wrote to Sara Bull on 17 October from 1123 St Paul street: 'We had a nice meeting last Sunday at Baltimore and [are] going to have one more next Sunday. Of course, they do not financially help me a bit; but as I promised to help them and like the idea, I speak for them.'<sup>62</sup> Typically Swamiji took responsibility for whatever situation he was in. This time he owned that he had made a promise to support an idea that he liked. There may have been more to it. In this case, Swamiji's keyword was 'help'. The *Kansas City Star* wrote: '[Walter] Vrooman is so full of fire and energy that it is impossible to talk with him and not catch some of his enthusiasm.'<sup>63</sup> No doubt Walter was so swept up in his epic vision of overcoming corrupt selfishness that he must have seemed like a Don Quixote. I think

Walter Vrooman (1869–1909)



Swamiji agreed to help him out of compassion. He surely saw a fire burning in Walter. I think he might have studied Walter's obsessive, overriding idealism with both sympathy and curiosity. Did he wonder if Walter's fanaticism was a force that could be directed inward? What was the tipping point between zeal and mania? Soon enough, he saw how fragile Walter's character was.

Walter Watkins Vrooman was truly a loose cannon. He was the most colourful and problematic of the brothers. His career was peppered with news reports of socialist agitation and publicity garnering. He spouted high ideals and attempted noble ventures, but he also said and did rash things. Walter might have stepped out of the pages of *Huckleberry Finn*. Burke related the story of his 1883 escapade from Kansas to Colorado with his brother Hiram when they were adolescents.<sup>64</sup> Blessed with enterprising wits, the bright boys not only survived, but thrived. Like a soldier who returns to battle again and again for its adrenaline thrill, Walter was drawn to confrontation. He was not an ordained minister—his brother Harry gave him the title of Reverend.<sup>65</sup> He often made headlines by accusing important men of corruption. In 1897 he married Anne Graf-flin—who was nineteen years older than he—and after campaigning in St Louis politics for a while, they went to Oxford, England in 1899. There, with Charles Beard's organisational help and Anne's money, Walter founded Ruskin Hall, a college for working men based upon the ideals of John Ruskin. It remains his one lasting legacy. He and Anne returned to America in 1902 where Walter transformed Avalon College in Trenton, Missouri into Ruskin College, a socialist and utopian enterprise. Walter also launched several cooperative business schemes in Kansas City. Returning to the stump speaking grounds of his youth, he began tent preaching in downtown Kansas City.<sup>66</sup> The *Kansas City Star* said: 'His power over audiences is

great. He is talented as an orator. And yet there is something visionary in all of his plans. Any one of the things connected with his co-operative movement might have been highly successful if worked alone, but he kept branching out in all directions until the movement became too gigantic for any one mind to grasp and control; then it fell.'<sup>67</sup> Anne shared his visionary dreams until she discovered his adultery and divorced him in 1903.<sup>68</sup> Walter fell apart. Ever the publicist, in 1904, he alerted the press that he was dying.<sup>69</sup> It seems that he was committed to a New York state hospital where he died in 1909.<sup>70</sup> In his last will and testament, Walter's father referred to him as 'my afflicted son'. 'I would bequeath to him all my love and sympathy and commit him to our merciful Heavenly Father, who is more merciful than any earthly parent.'<sup>71</sup>

Hiram Greeley Vrooman was the most metaphysical of the three. After trying journalism in New York, he spent a year at Harvard and became a Congregational minister in 1892. He moved to Baltimore to serve as a temporary pastor, and while there he discovered the philosophy of Emmanuel Swedenborg. He was ordained a Swedenborgian minister on 22 February 1894.<sup>72</sup> Hiram moved from Baltimore to Massachusetts in 1898 and became pastor of the New Jerusalem Church in Roxbury, but after two years he got gold fever, resigned his pastorate, and rushed off to the Klondike where his elder brother Frank was involved in business schemes.<sup>73</sup> Four years later, he returned to Roxbury, reportedly richer, and married a young graduate of Smith College.<sup>74</sup> Between 1900 and 1910 he organised cooperative companies in Maine and in Florida, and he promoted investment in gold-dredging machines through magazine ads. He was also involved in developing a utopian community in Crystola, Colorado. He wrote several books on Swedenborgianism, including some commentary on William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*. In the 1930s he made religious

radio broadcasts from Chicago and helped manage Carl's properties. He died in 1954.<sup>75</sup>

Carl Schurz Vrooman, the bright hope of the family, attended Harvard for three years. Citing ill health, he left college in the fall of 1894. In 1895 he made his first of many trips to Europe, and while there he became an honorary member of Oxford's Debating Union. In 1896 he made a politically astute marriage to Julia Green Scott, a niece of the vice-president of the United States, Adlai Stevenson. In fact, daughters of the vice-president were bridesmaids at both Carl's and his elder brother Frank's weddings. By 1896, Frank Buffington Vrooman was assistant pastor to Dr Hiram Washington Thomas of the People's Church in Chicago, where Swamiji spoke in 1893.<sup>76</sup> Julia and her mother owned considerable farmland in Iowa and Illinois, and Carl increased the land's yield through new, scientific, agricultural practices. Through a series of political appointments, he became assistant secretary of agriculture under President Woodrow Wilson. He travelled extensively, wrote for periodicals, and advocated for progressive agriculture and trade policies. His most memorable contribution was the Victory Garden campaign of World War I, which was revived again during World War II. He died in 1966.

The extroverted Vrooman brothers had a knack for promoting themselves in the press. They were theologically liberal, but were primarily drawn to religion as a vehicle for socialist politics. Although they preached a religion that was broad and inclusive, 'the line between nonsectarian and secular proved to be an extremely hard one to draw'.<sup>77</sup> They evidently saw no conflict of interest between their ministerial responsibilities and their for-profit schemes as long as they were 'cooperative'. No doubt Swamiji was disappointed that these bright young men were spiritually impeded by love of lucre.

What drew the Vroomans to Swamiji? Obviously, they were impressed by his spellbinding oratory and his intellect. In addition, he represented a politically oppressed people. No doubt Swamiji had conversed feelingly with them about the injustices suffered in India, thus rousing the brothers' heightened political sensibilities. They respected his encyclopaedic knowledge and liberal religious outlook. Although the brothers were intelligent, one wonders if they had any inkling of Swamiji's spiritual stature. Evidently they sought from him nothing more than the gloss that his celebrity status added to their 'Religion of Action' series.<sup>78</sup>


It appears that Swamiji dropped the Vroomans. He abruptly left for New York about 3 November, cancelling lectures advertised in Baltimore for 5 and in Washington D C for 6.<sup>79</sup> By that time he was lecturing independently, but on his behalf, the brothers announced on the

*Baltimore New Jerusalem Church on Calvert Street*





evening of 4 that he had been 'called to New York'. My feeling is that he received a distress telegram—possibly from Frances Bagley. She had been Swamiji's stalwart host in Detroit and in Annisquam. She and her children were very fond of him. Mrs Bagley was then in New York City where her daughter Helen was dangerously ill. Swamiji wrote in a letter: 'Miss Helen Bagley was seized with diphtheria in New York and suffered a great deal.'<sup>80</sup> When a mother calls for help, drop everything else and make haste. Swamiji said in his Baltimore Lyceum address on 14: 'Life is love, and when a man ceases to do good to others, he is dead spiritually' (2.493).

Reading between the lines of the Baltimore news reports indicates that Swamiji resisted attempts by others to publicise the hotel incident. He did not permit race-based insults to cloud his same-sightedness. That said, racial equality and social justice for all people were dreams dear to his heart. He felt far more keenly about those matters than the self-serving Vroomans could comprehend—but Swamiji was no one's endorsement tool. At all times, regardless of triumphs or injustices, Swamiji kept his 'eyes on the prize'; and true spirituality was not a prize to be gained through utopian schemes or newspaper notoriety. 

## Notes and References

1. See Marie Louise Burke, *Swami Vivekananda in the West: New Discoveries*, 6 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1985), 2.195.
2. 'High Priest of India', *Baltimore American*, 13 October 1894, 2. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.191.
3. See John Henry Barrows, *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893*, 2 vols (Chicago: Parliament Publishing, 1893), 2.973.
4. 'Priest Swami in Town, A High Caste Hindoo Visiting in Baltimore', *Baltimore News*, 13 October 1894 as reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.196.
5. Also: Swamiji felt that as an Asian, he could address inequality aimed at Asians. He did not presume to lay any claim upon the vast territory of grief suffered by African Americans.
6. 'A Wise Man Among Us', *Sunday Herald*, 14 October 1894, 8. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.200.
7. 'Priest Swami in Town, A High Caste Hindoo Visiting in Baltimore'.
8. 'A Wise Man Among Us'.
9. See 'Showed Him the Door', *Baltimore American*, 14 October 1894, 8. Also in Asim Chaudhuri, *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Findings* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2008), 604.
10. The paid advertisement for the Lyceum program promised 'good music'. The woman may have been the accompanist, because a Mr Martini led the singing. See *Baltimore Sun*, 13 October 1894, 4.
11. See Harlan B Phillips, 'A War on Philadelphia's Slums, Walter Vrooman and the Conference of Moral Workers, 1893', *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 76/1 (January 1952), 58.
12. Walter lived near Calvert railroad station. According to Sanborn maps, nearby hotels were the Windsor, the Calvert, and the Duke. The neighbourhood seems to be working class, with boarding houses interspersed with businesses and industrial warehouses, stables, a lard refinery, and carpentry shops.
13. 'Showed Him the Door'.
14. *Baltimore Sun*, Monday, 15 October 1894, 10.
15. 'A War on Philadelphia's Slums, Walter Vrooman and the Conference of Moral Workers, 1893', 58.
16. 'Showed Him the Door'.
17. See *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 9 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1-8, 1989; 9, 1997), 9.44.
18. Swami Virajananda, *Life of the Swami Vivekananda*, 4 vols (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1914), 2.336.
19. See 'Priest Swami in Town, A High Caste Hindoo Visiting in Baltimore'.
20. If the *News* reporter had witnessed any refusal firsthand, he would have written about it, since he described the admission to the Rennert in detail.

21. In the Mahabharata, Karna, Drona, and Bhishma declined to fight against the Kauravas because they had eaten their bread and salt. See Henry Clay Trumbull, *The Covenant of Salt*, (New York: Charles Scribner, 1899), 34.
22. 'Priest Swami in Town, A High Caste Hindoo Visiting in Baltimore'.
23. John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, Book 2, 1–5. The reporter was quoting from the passage that describes Satan's throne.
24. 'Priest Swami in Town, A High Caste Hindoo Visiting in Baltimore'.
25. See Lucinda H McKethan, 'Happy Darcy', *The Companion to Southern Literature* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2001), 328.
26. *New Discoveries*, 2.200.
27. 'Showed Him the Door'.
28. See 'Less Doctrine, More Bread', *Baltimore American*, 15 October 1894, 8. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.203.
29. See 'The Vrooman Brothers, They Expound the Religion of Action at the Lyceum Theatre, Assisted by Swami Vivekananda', *Baltimore Sun*, 15 October 1894, 10. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.205.
30. 'Public Opinion', *Morning Herald*, 17 October 1894, 4.
31. 'Buddha's High Priest', *Morning Herald*, 22 October 1894, 2. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.209.
32. *Baltimore News*, 22 October 1894, *New Discoveries*, 2.211.
33. 'The Religion of Buddha', *Baltimore American*, 22 October 1894, 8. Reprinted in *New Discoveries*, 2.211.
34. 'Religion of Action', *Baltimore Sun*, 22 October 1894, 10.
35. 'Buddha's High Priest'.
36. See 'A War on Philadelphia's Slums, Walter Vrooman and the Conference of Moral Workers, 1893', 47.
37. *Christian Recorder* (Philadelphia), 18 October 1894, in Gopal Stavig, *Western Admirers of Ramakrishna and His Disciples* (Kolkata: Advaita Ashrama, 2010), 313.
38. See *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Findings*, 607.
39. Between 15 to 19 October the story ran in these Kansas newspapers: *Osage County Chronicle*, *Oswego Independent*, *Parsons Daily Sun*, *Walnut Valley Times*, *The McPherson Daily Republican*, *The Ottawa Herald*, *Marion Record*, *Lawrence Daily Journal*, *The Atchison Daily Champion*, *The Council Grove Republican*, *The Weekly Republican*, *Abilene Daily Reflector*, and *Kansas City Gazette*.
40. *Complete Works*, 6.279. Note that it was not such a low hotel that the female musician could not stay there alone respectably.
41. Douglass died on 20 February 1895.
42. Douglass had been invited to the White House for President Lincoln's inaugural ball, but he was barred at the entrance because he was black until Lincoln was contacted and the President personally welcomed him in. 'They wouldn't let him in because he was black.' See Kenneth Morris Jr., great-great-great-grandson of Frederick Douglass interviewed by Amy Goodman, 'Does Donald Trump Think Frederick Douglass is Alive? Douglass's Great-Great-Great-Grandson Clarifies', *Democracy Now!*, 3 February 2017. <<http://democracynow.org/stories/17068&grquid=Q-SfpiZn&hl=en-IN>> accessed 6 April 2017.
43. *Complete Works*, 8.351.
44. Walter's espoused cause was socialism and equally distributed wealth—not civil rights. He worked with Jewish groups, but not African American groups. In 1897 he expressed ideas about 'saving the domination of the Caucasian race' from Slavs and Asiatics. See Ross E Paulson, *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1968), 150–1.
45. See *Memphis Commercial*, 17 January 1894 and *New Discoveries*, 1.247.
46. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, 5 vols (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1995), 1.153.
47. *Complete Works*, 6.279.
48. See *Swami Vivekananda in America: New Findings*, 623.
49. Anne's brother William opposed the marriage. He made Anne sign of deed of trust to protect her inheritance. She had a good income from it, but Walter persuaded her to file a lawsuit so he could have access to the principal. See 'Mrs Vrooman Explains', *Baltimore Sun*, 15 January 1898, 7. After five years, she won the suit and

- Walter proceeded to spend her money like water.
50. See 'A Tilt about A Word', *Baltimore Sun*, 20 November 1894, 8. By August 1894, Walter was also a member of this club.
  51. Hiram probably accompanied Swamiji on the train. See 'New Church Conference', *Washington Post*, 16 October 1894, 2.
  52. One of the delegates, Eugenia Cole from the Epsilon chapter at the University of Minnesota, may have seen Swamiji when he spoke in Minneapolis the previous December. At that time Swamiji was sponsored by the Kappa Kappa Gammas, but there was widespread student interest in his talk. The Epsilon chapter had been selected to host the next Alpha Phi convention at the University of Minnesota. See 'Girls who keep secrets', *Baltimore Sun*, 18 October 1894, 8. Another possibility is that Carl Vrooman, who attended a meeting of the Social Science Club at the Woman's College on 12 October, may have alerted a friend at the college of Swamiji's visit. See *Morning Herald*, 14 October 1894, 16.
  53. 'A Day of Entertaining, Close of the College Girls' Convention—Hindu Priest Their Guest', *Baltimore American*, 20 October 1894, 2. College sororities were known as fraternities in the nineteenth century.
  54. Roy died of leukemia aged 21 on 6 December 1903.
  55. *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937*, 79.
  56. See 'Religious Union', *Harvard Crimson*, 12 November 1895. Professor F G Peabody said that of all the religious societies on campus, 'the only one to which a man with broad religious ideas can come, is the Religious Union'.
  57. See 'Union for Practical Progress', *Boston Sunday Globe*, 13 May 1894, 9.
  58. See *New Discoveries*, 2.396. Harry came to Baltimore on 25 November 1894 to speak with his brothers in their 'Dynamic Religion' series.
  59. See *Complete Works*, 6.259 and 'The Rational Dress Movement', *The Arena*, 9.305.
  60. See 'Not with APA', *Boston Daily Globe*, 26 September 1894, 3.
  61. See *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937*, 118. Lee Meriwether described how Walter, unknown to him, appeared at his doorstep and volunteered to launch his campaign for the mayor of St Louis. Walter was capable of 'cold-calling'.
  62. *Complete Works*, 9.45.
  63. 'Dreamer's Collapse', *Kansas City Star*, 17 May 1902, 4.
  64. See *New Discoveries*, 2.193. Details are different in Harlan B Phillips, *Walter Vrooman—Restless Child of Progress*, (New York: Columbia University, 1954), 11.
  65. Harry, a newly ordained Congregational pastor, granted Walter and Hiram four-year licentiate status in Dayville, CN, on 7 June 1892. See *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937*, 88; note 23.
  66. See George Creel and John Slavens, *Men Who are Making Kansas City*, (Kansas City: Hudson Kimberly, 1902), 157.
  67. 'Dreamer's Collapse', 4.
  68. See 'Mrs Vrooman Gets Divorce', *Chillicothe Daily Constitution*, 15 June 1903, 1. Walter had three children by his paramour before 1903.
  69. See 'Walter Vrooman Dying', *Chillicothe Daily Constitution*, 23 May 1903, 4.
  70. He died on 2 December 1909 in the State Hospital of New York. See *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937*, 183, note 70.
  71. Hiram P Vrooman, Last Will and Testament dated 14 December 1907.
  72. See 'To Be Ordained Today', *Baltimore Sun*, 22 February 1894, 8.
  73. By 1899 Frank Vrooman's Klondike company was insolvent. 'Charges against Vrooman', *Baltimore Sun*, 13 January 1899, 6.
  74. See 'Roxbury Belle to Wed Former Boston Clergyman', *Boston Sunday Post*, 17 November 1907, 18.
  75. See 'Hiram Vrooman, Minister, Author, Dies in Florida', *The Pantagraph*, 26 February 1954, 3.
  76. See 'Bridegroom A Harvard Man', *Boston Daily Globe*, 29 December 1896, 12.
  77. *Radicalism and Reform, The Vrooman Family and American Socialist Thought 1837–1937*, 96.
  78. The Vroomans' series in the Lyceum Theatre lasted from October 1894 to February 1895. Each week had a new theme and novel attraction.
  79. See *Baltimore News*, 5 November 1894 as cited in *New Discoveries*, 2.224.
  80. *Complete Works*, 9.50.



# Gems of Memories: Reminiscences of Swami Saradeshnananda

**Swami Shuklatmananda**

**A**MONG THE OVERWHELMING NUMBER of devotees who came to the holy feet of Sri Sarada Devi from the remote corners of Bangladesh, Swami Saradeshnananda stands out as an illumined beacon. His pre-monastic name was Sri Gopesh Chandra Chakravorty. He was born in the village of Daspara of the Dulali region of Srihatta in 1892. In his youth he became close with the illustrious Indradayal Bhattacharya, later Swami Premeshananda, who eventually introduced him to the Ramakrishna Order and its ideals. He came to *Mayer Bari*, 'Mother's House' at Udbodhan in 1913 from his native village in Srihatta to visit the Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi. His desire remained unfulfilled as Mother was away at Jayrambati at that time. At last in 1915, he got the blessed opportunity to meet the Holy Mother. She blessed him with spiritual initiation and brahmacharya vows on their very first meeting. He served the Holy Mother for almost five years. Swami Saradeshnananda formally joined the Ramakrishna Order in 1923. He received the sannyasa vows from Swami Shivananda. After sannyasa, he was sent to Jayrambati again as a monastic worker. Apart from being sent to the Dhaka and Bangalore centres of the Ramakrishna Order, he actively participated in the massive relief works



led by the Ramakrishna Mission in Noakhali, Kachhar, Mansadweep, Hingalganj, and Madras. He spent many years of his life in spiritual austerities in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. He stayed at the Vrindavan Sevashrama, a branch centre of the Ramakrishna Mission, till his last from 1960, staying only one year in between at the Agartala centre of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1975, on the request of Swami Vireshwarananda, the tenth president of the Ramakrishna Order and an eminent disciple of Sri Sarada Devi. *Sri Sri Mayer Smritikatha* and *Sri Chaitanya Dev*, the two books written by him are considered invaluable assets of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda literature. He left his mortal coil at the Vrindavan Sevashrama on 11 December 1988. His earthly body was immersed in the holy waters of River Yamuna.

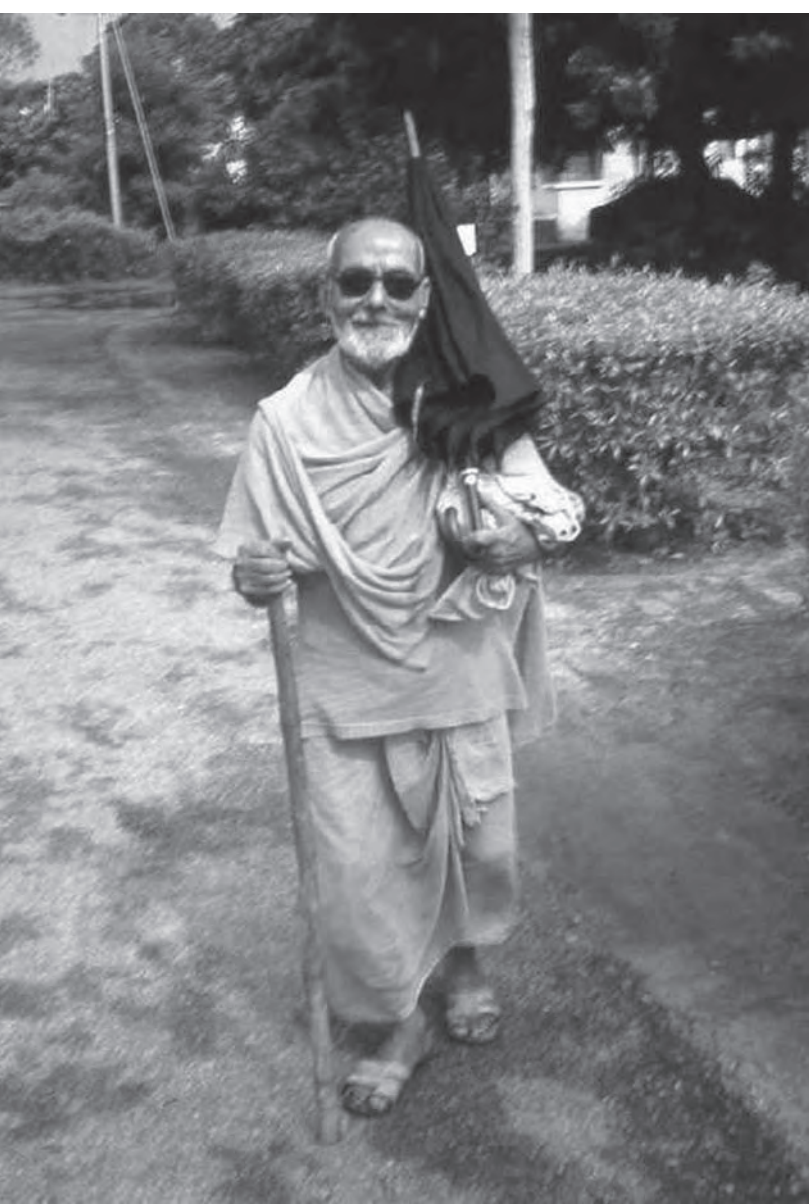
His life was a perfect blend of keen pragmatism and unfathomable spirituality thus enabling him to be a guide and friend to innumerable monastics and devotees. His profound insights about the pitfalls of spiritual life, his simple and austere lifestyle and above all, his unconditional love attracted one and all to him. I am a monk at Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Haridwar, and have served Swami Saradeshananda for ten years from 1978 to 1988 in Vrindavan Sevashrama. Here, I attempt to share with the readers my precious and blissful experiences in the holy company of Swami Saradeshananda.

In October 1978, I went to Vrindavan en route the Himalayas on my second attempt to leave hearth and home to become a monk. I was eighteen then. I had never visited any of the centres of the Ramakrishna Order before, let alone personally knowing any monk of the Order.

Upon entering Vrindavan Ramakrishna Sevashrama, the first thing one encounters is the temple of Sri Ramakrishna. Indeed, the temple looks beautiful. And, I felt like going inside to see it properly. I was very happy to see Sri Ramakrishna's image installed inside the temple. Standing in front of Sri Ramakrishna's image, this idea

crossed my mind: 'If only I could stay here!' Seeing nobody inside the temple, I came out through the path meant for parikrama and chanced to meet a monk with a calm and serene demeanour. Offering my salutations to him, I asked him if any arrangements could be made for my stay there. In reply, he returned the salutations and waved his hands towards the office and said: 'Please go to the office and ask Shakti Maharaj (Swami Upendrananda).'

It was my first meeting with any monk of the Ramakrishna Order. Within this short maiden meeting I was immensely attracted to him. There was a heavenly calmness on his face the like of which I had never seen on anyone's face before. Even his words sounded so tangibly sweet. Though clad in the simplest dress, his very appearance commanded spontaneous reverence. One strip of dhoti extending up to the knees, one dishevelled chaddar over the bare body, one clumsy bag under the arm, and one bamboo-stick—such was his appearance that day. And, peeping through the beard—which seemed to



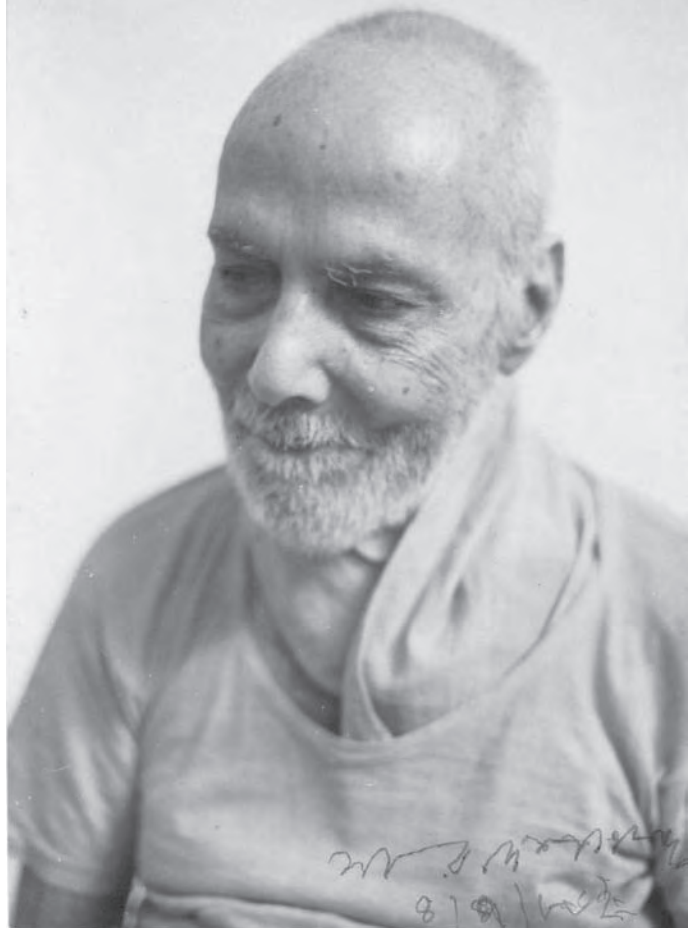


have been left unattended for a few weeks—was a serene smile! Later I came to know it was at that time daily that he returned from the temple after his japa and meditation. This first meeting with him stands out in my memory with glowing vividness even after a span of about forty years. How, by following his directions to go to the office, I got the blessed opportunity to join the Ramakrishna Order as a novice on that very day, is however, another story.

After spending a couple of days at the ashrama and getting to know him better, he seemed very near to me. Soon, owing to his heavenly love and affection, I developed a strong affinity towards him. And, I could not go to the Himalayas tearing myself away from this bond. I stayed on.

The monk, with whom I thus met, was most revered Gopesh Maharaj, a disciple and attendant of the Holy Mother, Swami Saradeshananda. A few days after joining the Vrindavan Sevashrama, I saw him one day, facing difficulties in climbing a staircase and I rushed up to help him. However, he objected: 'Oh, it is not necessary. I would myself be able to climb now. I will call you when necessary.'

Whenever we happened to meet, he would ask with a sweet smile: 'How are you? How do you find this place?' He was still quite active when I joined the monastery. Though he was almost eighty-six then, he would do everything on his own—going to the temple in the morning and in the evening, coming to the night reading or the dining hall. But, his health deteriorated within a couple of years. As far as I know, he never allowed anyone to do any personal service to him, much less ask for an attendant. Some monks like Ramesh Maharaj and Sachin Maharaj used to serve him in spite of his objections. I too started serving him out of love. Later, the secretary of the ashrama and the headquarters appointed me as his personal attendant.



Even at the age of eighty-six, he used to wash his clothes, clean the room, or even wash the plates after his meals, everything on his own. He simply wouldn't allow anyone to do these chores for him. Every day, he would walk to the temple from the monks' quarters, where he lived, a distance equal to the distance from the Belur Math main gate to the temple of Sri Ramakrishna in Belur Math, almost one kilometre. During noon, he would go to the dining hall and at night, he used to have his dinner, consisting of rusk and milk, in his room. He used to attend the night reading. After the reading was over, he would stay back for a while as discussions on diverse topics would go on and he would answer questions when asked.

On days when there was no night reading, all would gather in his room and spend some time in innocent chitchat. Even at that advanced age, he used to fast on special occasions like



Shivaratri, Kali Puja, and Janmashtami. Also on the birth anniversary celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sarada Devi, and Swamiji, he would not eat anything until the worship was over. In those special days he would sit in the temple, in silent prayer and meditation, well away from the prying eyes of the public.

I have never seen him doing anything that would make him conspicuous. To avoid public attention and bustle, he would even choose to sit in Sri Ramakrishna's bedroom. He never seemed to like public gathering and noise. However, if others were parties to such activities, he would not oppose or express his discomfort. A related incident that he revealed on enquiry, comes to my mind. On the occasion of the shifting of Vrindavan Sevashrama to the new plot, the erstwhile prime minister of India and his daughter

came to the inauguration. Despite the repeated requests of many, Swami Saradeshananda chose to remain in the old Sevashrama premises and did not come to the function. Rare indeed is such a soul who is so averse to publicity.

When the construction was underway in the new Sevashrama premises, all the sadhus continued to stay in the old ashrama and Saradeshananda would stay in a thatched hut in the new land of the ashrama. With the completion of construction, when the sadhus came to live in the new building, he moved to the old ashrama to live in seclusion as well as to play the role of an unappointed caretaker. The shrine of Sri Ramakrishna was established in a hall of the Sevashrama and the image was installed and consecrated by Swami Saradeshananda.<sup>1</sup>

He used to say: 'Sadhus belong to the Math. As such, they will eat in the Math and work for the Mission. They must not take even a penny from the Mission funds for their personal needs.' If I ever happened to take anything from the Sevashrama for his service or for my personal needs, he would become much annoyed and would scold me. Also, he greatly disliked using Mission letterheads or envelopes for personal correspondence—a habit many of us succumb to without much forethought. He would say: 'These are for official, not personal, use!'

A few days after joining the Sevashrama, I got the permission to sleep on the bed besides him. Earlier, I was not accustomed to wake up before sunrise. But now, in order to attend the *mangalarati*, morning matins, I had to rise early. On the other hand, he was an early riser his entire life. I do not remember ever having seen him sleeping after I got up in the morning. He always tried to get up from bed as noiselessly as possible lest my sleep be disturbed. Sometimes he would even quietly walk up to my bedside and wake me up by gently stroking my head, indeed with an affection exceeding



that of one's own mother. Only he knew how long he used to stand like that, caressing my head. And all he got in return for this love and affection were some words of reproach from me! Ah me! For, if he somehow fell down in some such incautious moment, would I not be burdened with a sense of guilt for the rest of my life!

Due to prolonged meditation in one sitting and not using sufficient warm clothes during the winter, he had contracted knee and back pains. One day he said: 'I am responsible for all these pains. The legs have become numb due to sitting for long hours.' I do not think he had any other diseases. For, he was not seen taking any regular medicines. He would not take allopathic medicines until it was unavoidable. But he was absolutely reluctant to take sleeping pills, even if the doctors insisted. He would say: 'It debilitates the brain!' When affected with the common cold, he would himself take some self-prescribed homeopathic medicines. He used to always keep some such medicines with him. He would also give these to other sadhus when necessary. We have seen him curing by homeopathic medicines the numerous warts on the head of Ramesh Maharaj, Swami Sudhirananda—an affliction that allopaths had already given up any hope of curing.

Swami Gitananda used to frequently suffer from influenza. Seeing this, Saradeshananda gave him some medicines, taking which Gitananda did not suffer for a complete year. While in Jayrambati he gave homeopathic medicines to the Holy Mother also. In his own words:

It was a winter evening. The Mother was resting after her noonday meal. A son was working in the dispensary in the outer courtyard, when suddenly the news came that the Mother was suffering from a severe stomach ache. He ran to the Mother and standing beside her bed, asked her how she was and what the various symptoms were, so that he could prescribe a

Homeopathic medicine for her. When the Mother told him the details, he quickly brought a medicine and gave it to her.<sup>2</sup>

I used to jokingly tell him: 'He is not an ordinary doctor! He is the doctor of one who is the healer of the disease of worldliness, the Holy Mother!' He would retort: 'Oh! This little devil!' Of course I had many such sweet names from him. Though he did not have any blood pressure problems, his blood pressure had to be measured regularly as per the doctor's instruction. However, he would be much annoyed at the weird process. So, one day I told the doctor: 'Though he does not have any blood pressure problem, his blood pressure goes up as soon as he sees the equipment.' The doctor smilingly replied: 'Then let it be. There is no need to trouble him. It can be done occasionally.' Since I started serving Swami Saradeshananda, I had seen Dr G G Jones<sup>3</sup> providing him the necessary treatment. Indeed, the doctor was very respectful to him.

Gopesh Maharaj used to lead such a simple life that it was only to be seen to be believed. His clothes were most commonplace—indeed, they were just about enough to get on. I never saw him using full-sleeve shirts. Instead, he used to wear what is known as *fatua*, a loose-fitting half-sleeve garment without buttons that opens up at the neck allowing one's head to pass through. And, he used to wear these only for two-three months in a year. The vests, chaddar, caps, and the like, that he used to wear were pretty old and patched up here and there.

Once I stitched up a cap from used vests. That made him very happy. Afterwards, he would use the cap in light winter. He simply wouldn't want to wear new caps for he would say: 'These clamp down on my head. In a while, the head will start aching!' Gradually, I started replacing his old clothes with new ones. Initially, he was very observant about such things and as a result,

I had my share of scoldings. Later however, he wouldn't say anything. He would never wear a full dhoti. He would cut it into halves and wear one half at a time, just up to the knees.

Once, as some good dhotis had accumulated with him, I requested him: 'Maharaj, the Holy Mother's birth anniversary celebration is approaching. You have many new dhotis. And, you are Mother's initiated disciple. All sadhus and brahmacharis will be very happy if you distribute the dhotis among them.' Smilingly, he replied: 'Yes, I shall, but before that I'll ask them to deposit all the extra ones they have. They will take these from me when necessary. I know everyone has more clothes than he needs.' Later he gave away all the dhotis to the Manager swami for keeping in the store meant for the sadhus.

(To be continued)

## Notes and References

1. Swami Vireshwarananda, the tenth president of the Ramakrishna Order, was supposed to perform the sacred ceremony, but he could not come due to some emergency work at Belur Math. He instructed the Sevashrama authorities to request Swami Saradeshananda to perform the ceremony in his stead. Saradeshananda acceded to their request.
2. Swami Saradeshananda, *The Mother As I Saw Her: Being Reminiscences of Holy Mother Sri Sarada Devi*, trans. Prof. J N Dey (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1982), 165.
3. Born in Great Britain, Dr G G Jones was a famous physician who dedicated his life for the service of India at the Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Vrindavan. He served till his last, for about twenty-two years. He was an initiated disciple of Swami Prabhavananda of the Hollywood Vedanta Society, USA.





# Mandukya Upanishad

Swami Ranganathananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

**D**HARMAS MEANS ENTITIES; jivas, souls, objects, entities—all are called *dhar-mas* in Buddhist and Vedantic terminology in this particular context. The other context is the moral life. Ethical life we call dharma. Here dharma means entity. All entities, all souls, all are called *dhar-mas*. *Adibuddha*, we are ever awakened from the very beginning. That is our true nature. Unlike in Christianity, you are from the beginning, sinners. We can give you this alternative. Either you say that from the beginning I am a sinner; Protestants brought the idea of sin more seriously than the Catholics. Luther did this. ‘Oh! Terrible sin and guilt, that Adam’s sin sitting heavy on me, I have a sense of guilt.’ Without this there is no religion. That is the idea. We say without this, purity, there is no religion. ‘I am ever pure, that is my true nature.’ ‘He who, having known this, rests without (sees the needlessness of) seeking further knowledge, is alone capable of realising the Highest Truth.’<sup>106</sup> ‘*Yasyai-vam bhavati kshantih so’mritatvaya kalpate*.’ He alone becomes immortal.

All *Dharmas* or *Jivas* are from the very beginning and by their very nature, all peace [*adi-shanta*], unborn and completely free. They are characterised by sameness and are non-separate from one another. [They are essentially one from the very beginning.] Therefore the *Jivas* are *Atman* unborn, always established in ‘sameness’ and ‘purity’ itself. ... Those who always rely on (attach themselves to) separateness can never realise the innate purity of the Self. [One is separate from the other; they can never realise

the innate purity of the self.] Therefore those who are drowned in the idea of separateness and who assert the separateness of (entities) are called narrow-minded (305).

Or, chicken brain. ‘*Vaisharadyam tu vai nasti bhede vicharatam sada, bhedanimnah prithag-vadas-tasmat-te kripanah smritah*.’ *Kripana* is the word we used in the beginning also. *Kripana* means a stingy person who pays only one or two cents with great difficulty. Though he has plenty, just gives less; that kind of a stingy mind. Those who have the idea of separateness, they have a stingy mind; very limited, a pinhole mind. Every one of this conflict in society comes from the stingy mind. Big minds will never come into this kind of war and violence. How to make big minds out of small minds? That is education. That is religion. But religion also encourages you to have little minds. What a misfortune! Religions have created more little minds than irreligion. Atheists are much more broadminded than religious people. See the prayer: ‘Oh Lord! Give to that man, the light you have given to me.’ What a foolish prayer! He cannot get his own light? Whatever light I have got, he must get it. Many people are praying like this in churches. ‘That Protestant, give him that light which you have given to we Catholics.’ Everybody will pray. That is a chicken mind. They don’t realise it. How can they? They are frogs in the well. Can he realise what is in the sea? They are all frogs in the well. ‘I will tell you a little story.’ Swamiji begins one of his Chicago lectures. ‘Why We Disagree?’

is the title of this lecture. Then he says: 'I will tell you a little story.'<sup>107</sup> Then he begins the story of the frog in the well. The Hindu well, the Muslim well, the Christian well—the frog is there, can't see anything bigger.

'Those who have realised the truth regarding the Ultimate Reality described above, are alone free from narrowness.'<sup>108</sup> You can see it in history. This realisation alone makes for broad toleration, understanding; everything else makes you *kripāna*, narrow-minded, petty-minded. 'Others are verily narrow-minded [*kripāna*]' (ibid.). Two words we have seen: *brahmana* and *kripāna*. They always pit it against each other. When you are a *brahmana*, your mind is infinite. The *kripāna* mind is narrow and small. It is not a caste *brahmana*; *brahmana* is one who has achieved this infinite knowledge of Brahman. Others are all *kripānas*, says the *Bṛihad-aranyaka Upanishad*. Who are they? "Drowned in the idea of separateness" means those who stick to the idea of separation, those who confine themselves to the multiplicity of phenomenal experiences. Who are they? They are those who assert that the multiplicity of objects exists *i.e.*, the dualists. ... Therefore it has been truly said that these people are narrow-minded' (ibid.).

Then in the *Bṛihadaranyaka Upanishad* there is a text of the conversation between Sage Yajñavalkya and Gārgi. She was the woman who questioned Yajñavalkya. Yajñavalkya answers her. 'Compare "Whoever, O Gārgī, without knowing that *Akṣara* (the Imperishable), offers oblations in this world, sacrifices, and performs penance for a thousand years, his work will have an end. Whatsoever, O Gārgī, without knowing this *Akṣara*, departs this world, he is *narrow-minded*. But he, O Gārgī, who departs this world, knowing this *Akṣara*, is a *Brāhmaṇa*'<sup>109, 110</sup> The other is a *kripāna*, this is a *brahmana*—two words come, narrow-minded, broadminded.

'They alone are said to be of the highest

wisdom who are firm in their conviction of the Self, unborn and ever the same. This, ordinary men cannot understand' (ibid.). That is another thing; their immense range, how can this puny fellow understand? '*Aje samye tu ye kechid-bhavisyanti sunischitah, te hi loke mahajñanas-tachcha loko na gahate*'. *Mahajñana*, *mahadhi* is big knowledge, expansive knowledge. *Tachcha loko na gahate*. Ordinary people cannot understand. Sri Ramakrishna tells that beautiful parable: A brinjal seller appraising a diamond. A man got a precious diamond. He wanted to know its value. First he took it to a brinjal seller. 'What do you think the value of this will be?' 'Oh! It is fine.' 'How much can you give me?' '9 kgs of brinjal I can give you,' he said. 'Is that all? Nothing more?' 'No, nothing more.' Then, he went to a cloth merchant. He said, 'Fine.' He spoke in terms of his own business. '20 yards of cloth I shall give you.' Like that, finally he went to a diamond merchant. He said, 'It has tremendous cost, hundred thousand dollars I shall give you.' He understands the value of the diamond.<sup>111</sup> What can a brinjal seller understand about it? That is the human evaluation of great men as Socrates. What could the poor politicians in Athens understand his greatness? 'He is a corruptor of our youth,' they said. 'Take poison and send him off.' That most beautiful man, the most glorious man, was killed like this. Plato laments in his book afterwards. After that, Plato distrusted all democracy. These mobs, government by mobs, he called, mobocracy. They can't appreciate greatness.

This is Supreme knowledge, 'incapable of being understood by the poor intellect, by the unwise, *i.e.*, by persons of small intellect who are outside the knowledge of Vedānta—is thus explained in this verse.'<sup>112</sup> There is a wonderful passage coming.

Others, *i.e.*, persons of ordinary intellect, cannot understand their ways, that is to say, the Supreme Reality realised by the wise. [These



people cannot comprehend at all.] It is said in the *Smṛti*, 'Even the gods feel puzzled while trying to follow in the footsteps of those who leave no track behind, [knowledge of Brahman means no track behind] of those who realise themselves in all beings and who are always devoted to the welfare of all. They leave no track behind like the birds flying through the sky' (307).

Buddha also uses this expression. Can you see where Buddha has gone? You can't! They leave no track behind. They are in you, they are in you—they are everywhere. And this is the way Shuka is described in the Bhagavata, exact description: '*Sarvabhūta hṛdayam munim anato'smi*; I salute Shukadeva, who can enter the hearts of all living beings.'<sup>113</sup> I salute that sage who has no separate individuality. He lives in the heart of all. His father had realised great things, but not the highest. He knew he was separate from others. But the son had realised himself to be one with all. So, the son was going out, away from the house, to become a monk, in the deep forest. Father is following him. 'My son! My son! Where are you going?' Like that, crying like any father will do. Then, on the way there was a river. Young women were bathing there, completely naked. First the son came and the women never felt any shame or any shyness. They continued to bathe and the boy went. He was a young man of 16 or 18 at that time. Then the father came. As soon as they saw him, they went up and began to dress themselves. Then this man stopped. What is this wonderful thing that you have done? My young son is full of youth, yet you were never ashamed in his presence. I am an old man and you are ashamed! Then, the girls said, 'There is a truth in it, sir. Your son, though young, has realised his oneness with all. He has no physical consciousness, a separate consciousness. You have a separate consciousness. We felt immediately a little modesty in your presence.' These

are all deep psychology. You can see Bhagavata is full of that, and based on this idea, when you realise that infinite, you are not an individual among individuals. Everybody feels one with you in your presence, because you are one with all. '*Tē hi loke mahajñāna*.' They are the people with infinite knowledge, *mahajñāna*, but the world cannot comprehend that infinite knowledge. They understand only small, small bits.

'Knowledge (consciousness), the essence of the *Jīvas* (who are unborn), [all *jīvas* have consciousness in their essence] is admitted to be itself unborn and unrelated (to any external object). This knowledge is proclaimed to be unconditioned as it is not related to any other object (which, really speaking, does not exist).'<sup>114</sup> '*Yato na kramate jñānam-asangam tena kīrtitam*.' What is the nature of that knowledge of infinite pure consciousness field? That is knowledge and that is our nature. *Tat tvam asi* means that. You are not a little thing with a little knowledge. You are knowledge itself. That is your true nature.

'The slightest idea of variety (in *Ātman*) entertained by the ignorant bars their approach to the unconditioned. The destruction of the veil (covering the real nature of *Ātman*) is out of the question [for such people]. ... All *Dharmas* (i.e., *Jīvas*) are ever free from bondage and pure by very nature' (309). '*Alabdha-varāṇas sarve dharmāḥ prakṛiti-nirmalāḥ, adau buddhas-tathā mukta budhyanta iti nayaḥ*.' 'They are ever illumined and liberated from the very beginning. Still the wise speak of the *Jīvas* as capable of knowing ("the Ultimate Truth")' (ibid.). From the relative point of view you say, yes, you have something to learn, something to know. Try to know. But we know you are ever free, that infinite *Ātman*. Sri Ramakrishna said: 'I see all of you as Narayanas, mother has shown me you are all Narayanas.' That is his vision. Upanishads also said the same thing.

‘The knowledge of the wise one, who is all-light, is ever untouched by objects. All the entities as well as knowledge (which are non-different) are also ever-untouched by any object. This is not the view of the Buddha’ (311). They did not say positively this view. They have only denied all this illusory nature of all experiences. They did not positively say that this self-effulgent truth is the Atman, the nature of all. ‘*Kramate na hi buddhasya jnanam dharmeshu tapi nah, sarve dharmas-tatha jnanam naitad-buddhena bhashitam.*’ In Buddha’s teachings, so far as the books are concerned, this positive teaching is not there. But that is what he meant according to the understanding of all people.

‘Having realised that condition (*i.e.*, the knowledge of the Supreme Reality) which is extremely difficult to be grasped, profound, birthless, always the same, all-light, and free from multiplicity, we salute It [this great state again and again] as best as we can’ (312). We salute that state. Mount Everest is an experience. Petty little hills here and there, finally you come to Mount Everest. Wonderful, majestic, we salute you. *Durdarsham*, difficult to see or realise, *atigambhiram*, infinitely majestic, like the ocean you can say. *Ajam samyam*, unborn equal, *visharadam*, pure and clear. *Buddhva padam-anantatvam*, realising the state of non-separateness, we salute it again and again, if salutation is possible, he says. *Namaskurmo yathabalam*, according to our strength, we salute.

Shankara says: ‘The treatise is now completed. This Salutation is made with a view to extol the knowledge of the Supreme Reality’ (*ibid.*). In the beginning we said the yoga of the untouched, *asparsha yoga*. That is concluded now. What a gigantic experience it is! ‘It is extremely difficult to understand it. In other words, it is difficult of comprehension as it is not related to any of the four possible predicates, such as existence,

non-existence, etc. [existence non-existence, and absolute non-existence]’ (*ibid.*). None of these predicates can apply there. ‘It is profound, that is, very deep like a great ocean’ (*ibid.*). Like the Pacific Ocean, forty-thousand feet deep, like that. Ordinarily, a pot is only six inches deep. This is *atigambhiram*. ‘People devoid of discrimination cannot fathom it. This knowledge (*Jñāna*) is further, birthless, always the same and [all-luminous, ever luminous] ... . Having attained this knowledge which is free from multiplicity, having become one with it, we salute it. Though this absolute knowledge cannot be subjected to any relative treatment (such as, salutation etc.) yet we view it from the relative standpoint and adore it to the best of our ability’ (312–3). That is a nice way of putting it. You can’t make any salutation to these things. But we treat it as apart from it for the time being and salute it. ‘Here ends Śrī Gauḍapāda’s *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad Kārikā* with the Commentary of Śrī Śaṅkara. Aum Peace! Peace! Peace!’ (313).

*Shantih! Shantih! Shantih!*



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113. *Bhagavata*, 1.2.2.
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# Saga of Epic Proportions

Swami Sandarshananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

THE LETTER perfectly indicates her close knitting with Bose. It offers an insight into the depth of the matter of her connectivity with him through Nivedita and Swamiji—she never loses sight of this aspect. Before actually receiving her letter Bose meanwhile writes to her on 14 June 1905:

Dearest Mother,

I had to postpone work for a couple of days—and am renewing it today. Just finished about 500 pages of the book, another 200 to be written yet.

I do not know what the future might bring, but I have sent a message to the Lt Governor that I mean to have freedom for my work, whether with or without their help. Of course you know that they have now the strongest combination. It is just as well that things should come to a crisis one way or another.

With much and much love

From your affectionate

Son.<sup>22</sup>

Bose was then in trouble and earnestly seeking respite from it. The minimum freedom he needed to pursue research and writing was being obstructed by variously crafted means. A brief account of the harassment he was facing during his attachment to Presidency College of Calcutta as professor, has been given by Nivedita.

When I came to Calcutta I first knew Prof. and Mrs. Bose in the end of the year 1898. I was horrified to find the way in which a great worker could be subjected to continuous annoyances

and petty difficulties with the evident earnest desire of those who were about him to end his distinction which was personally galling to them. The college-routine was made as arduous as possible for him, so that he could not have the time he needed for investigation. And every little thing that happened was made an excuse for irritating correspondence and flagrant misrepresentation (2.555).

Nivedita wrote this to Rabindranath Tagore in 1903. Mrs Bull was surely aware of all such pains Bose was continuously suffering from. As she heard from others so also she had listened to him in confidence.

Soon after receiving her letter of 12 June, he somehow learnt that Mrs Bull was coming to Calcutta. It was great news to him. He was extremely happy and excited, wondering he would get her beside as part of his life of thick and thin. He sent her an immediate reply expressing his joy.

(21.06.1905?)

*My dearest mother,*

How good of you to say that you wish to see your bairns. I always wished to think that you would come whenever we wished for you. But the last time you came, you were so ill, that I am afraid of asking you till some supreme occasion should rise. I am always keeping the call sacred for that occasion. When the Child [Sister Nivedita] was ill, I would have sent for you but that there was no time. But you must at least in your mind hold yourself ready to come

all at once. If I can only feel that I shall feel so much rested.

We have done 3/4th of the work. Then remains the last one-fourth. There is abnormal heat-wave in Calcutta—there is a talk of the College being closed for another fortnight, in that case I may be able to finish it, at least the rough sketch of it.

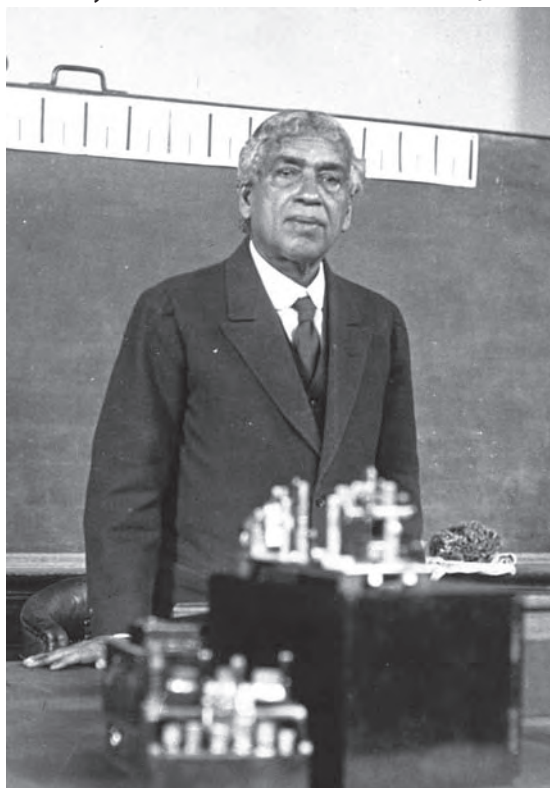
With much love

Your affectionate

Son (2.776).

Bose's diligent devotion to science characterised the Indian mind and its excellent intellectual capability comparable with any great intellectual as scientist in the world. The dirty design to thwart and suppress him got Nivedita's hackles up. Mrs Bull's awareness of it was enough for Bose to be able to earn her close proximity.

*Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose (1858–1937) Lecturing on the Nervous System of Plants at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1926*



Her open-armed reception and assistance was not only cathartic to him but also lent a niche to his scientific enterprise. The cited correspondences between them make clean breast of the fact with the mention of her 'will' that Bull was always there till she breathed her last.

Prior to his acquaintance with her, Bose had to pass through severe hardship for years. Completing studies in England, he returned to India and got a job of professorship at the Presidency College on the high recommendations of the then Viceroy Lord Ripon. But Sir Alfred Croft, the Director of Public Instructions, DPI, appointed him in the inferior Provincial Education Service instead of the Imperial Education Service for which Lord Ripon sent recommendations, being impressed by his credentials. Bose readily declined the job and immediately on a token remuneration joined the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science founded by Dr Mahendra Lal Sircar, who is otherwise famously known for his close interactions with Sri Ramakrishna as his physician. Coming to understand Bose's misery, Lord Ripon took it exceptionally and compelled Sir Alfred Croft to appoint Bose duly in the Imperial Education Service as professor of physics at the Presidency College, Calcutta. But, ironically, in his salary statement of the first month Bose observed he was being paid one third of what his colleagues in the Imperial Education Service in the same capacity were drawing. He refused to accept the pay but didn't quit the job like before, and carried on with his duties without any salary whatsoever. He continued in such a state of privation incessantly for three years. After that when he was, however, reinstated with all his dues he had to grapple with another set of difficulties deliberately created by the college authorities to obstruct his research work.

Continuing, in her aforesaid letter to Rabindranath Tagore, Nivedita wrote: 'These things may seem small in your eyes, but if you have the least idea (as you must have) of how impossible it is to do work requiring great insight or great and sustained emotion, unless there is freedom and peace. You will know how wonderful it is that our friend should have continued to work on and achieve, in spite of his surroundings at that time' (555). Mrs Bull was certainly posted about all those trials and tribulations he had to bear in the past yet remained undaunted. She must have had wholeheartedly appreciated his indomitable spirit, reflecting Swamiji's influence over him perhaps. The chemistry of such affectionate relationship of Mrs Bull, Sister Nivedita, Miss Macleod, and Mrs Sevier with J C Bose evolved, endured, and enriched because of Swamiji's indelible presence at the back of their minds, constantly working as a catalyst evoking optimum results. For instance, before intimate communication began between Bose and Bull, Nivedita pleaded with Miss Macleod as well, to assist Bose giving moral support and encouragement in her own way. Her letter of 8 April 1899 to Miss Macleod quoted earlier bears out how intensely she tries to include Bose within their orbit in which Swamiji happens to be at its center. She writes in the letter putting her heart for the welfare of Bose.

Incidentally, there is also mention of Swamiji's visit to the Boses's in a commemorative publication on the occasion of Bose's centenary celebrations. From it one could see that Swamiji went to their house sometime after his return from the first visit to the West in 1897. However, there was obviously no possibility of such meetings later, after his return from the second and final visit to the West. Boses were then abroad and didn't anyway come back to Calcutta before Swamiji's demise in 1902. Meanwhile, as said earlier, their

meeting happened at Paris for the last time in 1900 with all happiness evidently, having their earlier contact and closeness at its background. The publication says with quite an assurance of that *bonhomie* existing among them at the time:

The editor of this brochure had more than once heard from Lady Bose how Swamiji, in between his sojourns abroad, would call on his friend in Calcutta and amuse him with stories of his many odd experiences abroad and regale himself with East Bengal dishes—hot curries cooked specially for him by her—the hotter the better. One particular visit Lady Bose vividly remembered—the surprise the Swami gave by turning up late one winter evening in complete European attire, driving from Belur in a coach and pair.<sup>23</sup>

The visits alluded to here must have happened, if at all, only after Swamiji got acquainted with them through Nivedita, who arrived in Calcutta in 1898 and, staying for a year and a half, had left with Swamiji for his second visit to the West in 1899. Things thus taking place conclusively during this period prove that Swamiji definitely won their hearts and minds, for which Nivedita was so eager. It was in fact stated by Nivedita to Macleod on 25 April with a spontaneous excitement and exuberance that Swamiji was taking her 'out to dinner at the Boses'.<sup>24</sup> The hallmark writ resplendent on J C Bose was of Indianness, regarding which these noble foreign ladies were enlightened by Swamiji, with a view to generating love for the people and civilisation of this country. Hence it was but natural that they were enamoured of him.

Nivedita laments for the rigours Bose bore, in her letter of 25 April after expressly saying how she does 'love and worship' Boses and Bose 'sometimes seems too holy for one to speak of' (1.123). Telling her that they were going away for two months, she said, 'But the cruelty the cruelty the cruelty and the meanness of a conquering



people' (ibid.). Macleod had, she believed, a 'great divine heart' for which she dared to tell her these things. Nivedita then resumes about Bose:

But oh can you realise how 'clashings with authorities' *can* be willfully added to the fatigue of great work and the physical depression of climate to make a saint and a scholar hate his life? And you know how that phrase 'clashings with authorities' covers insults and slights as well. I can see that he *almost* regrets having refused the great English appointment once offered to him. And if he once regrets it, I feel as if might and meanness will have succeeded in doing their worst. But I urged Mrs. Bose last night to try and get other offers for him, for if he should have one offer—whether he accepted or refused, it would restore to him that sense of freedom that would be salvation. And can you think of any University in the world to which such work would not be a glory? (ibid.).

Angst mingling with anxiety and expectation has given the colour of her delicate feeling for Bose that itself exists as a piece of extraordinary document of high sensitivity in the medium of letters. Next day, on 26 April, she writes another letter to Mrs Bull in the same vein. Remembering Bull's birthday on 24 May, she was full of her praise. She says how she looks the 'soul that "radiates peacefulness", to use the word of your new son [Bose]' (1.124). Then, after a while, an emotionally charged witness to Bose's agony, she deliberates:

*Why* must this great soul be tortured to death? And by nothings—unmanliness—deliberate slights, and difficulties made without necessity. His wife begins to regret bitterly that he refused the offer made in England—and I pray that *he* may not regret or I shall feel that life is indeed the prey of the wicked—a fruitless struggle. But I urged her to get offers made to him if she could, for if he only had alternatives at this moment I cannot help thinking that the *moral* freedom of life would come back. Even

if he did not go, and his work is so grand. Just fancy—all that nine months that he was in England last he was working—not even a Sunday off—and at such a rate that he was absolutely unconscious of the outside world, would mix everything up—news—food—big things and little things and the rest. An ecstasy of scientific vision—and he came back to this slow crucifixion (1.125–6).

She loses poise and says, 'Grannie [because Swamiji called her mother], I *hate* my own people! Then! They are poltroons' (1.126). She continues: 'He cannot work now—heaven has died away, and he is shut out. Yet—not one bitter word—always the pained astonishment that he minds—always that feeling that it must be deserved—always the remembrance that *this* is not England nor the English character' (ibid.).

In this condition of broken patience she lastly spells her changed notion thus: 'Do you remember how I told Swami that I could never fire on the English flag? I could no more identify myself with that now than I could fly. I see that England's course is not yet run here—but I LONG with all my heart for the day when it shall be. And I pray that I may be reincarnated to cry "Young India" when the time comes to snatch the country's freedom from us, as the very youngest and earnest of recruits may have shouted by Mazzini's side in the days of the freedom of Italy' (ibid.).

Clearly, her revolutionary idea was kindled by Mazzini in her Celtic blood early. Born in 1805 at Genoa, Giuseppe Mazzini wrote on advanced liberalism. He is famously known for his role in organisations 'Young Italy' and 'Young Europe'. He took arms under Garibaldi for the cause of Italian nationalism, and abhorred the monarchical form of government. He spent the later part of his life in London and died at Pisa in 1872. British imperialism with its exploitative

policy of nasty colonialism made Nivedita sick. She contemplated as early as 1899, an upheaval for summary ouster of the Raj from India for the atrocities the Raj unleashed on Indian people of which Bose's case was an important example she highlighted globally. Resorting to his problems, she could strike the right chord to touch the hearts of those who vibrated with the same wavelength, considering nationalism and right to freedom crucial to the dignified existence of every people on earth.

### ***Guru and Disciple***

Each letter Nivedita wrote was laden with

precious pictures of matters that lets one visualise the developments on the score of her way of looking at things vis-à-vis numerous circumstances, containing various persons of importance who lend to the content of the saga of Swamiji's life and work. But the lengthy one she jotted down on 1 May 1899 for Miss Macleod was specially laden with some hypersensitive issues concerning her own life as well. Macleod and she were bosom friends and confided in each other without the least reservations—nothing whatever good or bad would ever remain hidden among them while communicating, for they understood one another

*Nivedita with Swami Vivekananda in Kashmir*



so nicely—Nivedita having faith in Macleod's wisdom. Even then, how they individually figured to Swamiji might not have been a simple thing to any of them to understand. How Swamiji rated them as dear ones must have always been something that kept them guessing and tense perhaps.

This is the letter in which there is a narrative of Nivedita's intimate conversation with him which divulges Swamiji's estimations about them almost in clear terms. But with regard to Nivedita's mixing with Bose, Swamiji's feeling was quite stern and of deeper significance with implications having a direct bearing on her lifestyle and behaviour, which was hard for Nivedita to stomach instantly. It was with a view to correcting her as to what kind the life of one ought to be really under the monastic vows.

Talking about Macleod, Swamiji told Nivedita, 'She's my good luck, you know' (1.128). Then explained when Macleod is with him, 'everything goes well,' and he gets 'plenty of success' (ibid.). He had finally said: 'I shall have to bring Jo [Macleod] back. I can do nothing without her' (ibid.). This was recognition of an elevated and mature character of Macleod in disguise indeed. Swamiji maintained such a view about her till to the last. Nivedita was never jealous because of this. She was rather dependent on her all along for many things that demanded serious advice.

Subsequently, when Nivedita shifted the discussion to herself she directly asked him about her position with regard to the possibility of her getting sannyasa from him. Swamiji initiated her as a brahmacharini of the Ramakrishna Order on 25 March 1898 at Belur Math. After a year on 26 March 1899, he initiated her as a *naishtika* brahmacharini. She was anxious for sannyasa and was expecting her Master to invest it upon her early. But she was at the same time

conscious about the fact that she perhaps lacked something without the fulfilment of which it was difficult to win from him any such favour. Hence, she had squarely 'asked him what perfection' she 'could strive for to be worthy of being a *Sanyasini*' (ibid.). He quickly answered, 'You just keep as you are' (ibid.). It surely came as a big jolt to her and left her heartbroken. She said to Macleod she thought it 'sealed' her 'determination for all time' (ibid.).

She wanted to be a little clearer. As such, she wrote: 'But very cautiously I tried to find out if my running about and paying visits were a blemish in his eyes—as it was beginning to be in my own. He declared that it was not. So that evening I told the Boses that I would go on coming on Fridays as long as they would have me' (1.128–9). She, however, found him in 'entirely different' mood next day. About it she said: 'Swami was quite irritable and unwell. After tea he took me round the garden and broached the question of Dr. Bose Himself. Then he broke out in one of his strong moods' (1.129). Swamiji said to her in exasperation, 'There was no salvation for a householder' (ibid.). He told her in a very sharp tongue condemning marriage and its miserable consequence in the context of the highest good determined by spirituality. Swamiji's subjective message to her as her guru was for the sincere practice of celibacy and for striving seriously to attain its goal, keeping safe distance from a householder, however great that householder might be. For meaningful progress in spiritual life as a nun, he wanted to set her on the right path practically. Which is why, he told her all that separately in exhortations, considering it his responsibility to give his disciple, whom he brought from abroad, the correct direction with the aim of making her spiritually realised through selfless service to India as an effective means to its accomplishment.



Nivedita continues relating Macleod what Swamiji wanted her to do:

I was to tell him [Bose] this if I dared. Tell him he would never be strong if he did not commit some great renunciation. Marriage was horrible, it was the door to birth and so on. He had begun now to receive those subtle sensations telling of the desire of those who had touched the food he ate. This thing was horrible. Why had so and so ever married? Even at this moment he was suffering physically from contacts such as these. His days were drawing to an end but even if they were not he was going to give up compromise. He would go to Almora and live there in meditation. He would go out into the world and preach *smashing* truths (ibid.).

Swamiji elaborated because he held himself before her as an object lesson of monastic ideal, which is absolutely opposite to that of a householder's, therefore too much intimacy and frequent contacts with family people was detrimental to one who chose to tread the course of renunciation and realisation.

Interestingly, Nivedita was well aware of Bose's ignorance and superstition. She was grieved to find his sullen attitude to Swamiji. Before this she told Mrs Bull on 15 March:

It grieves me much to find the attitude of men like Dr. Bose ... to the Swami, since I lectured on Kali. *Now* all that you said about the Comparative Study of Religion is beginning to have its real value for me. I understand by the baffled feeling he gives me when we talk on the question how impossible any other line of approach will be for him, to see these things as we see them. And his position, great thinker and scholar as he is in other lines, seems, compared to Swami's on this branch, a position of ignorance and superstition compared to science and reason (1.84-5).

She realised that his vision was badly clouded and thought 'it's practically useless to refer to the

question directly at issue' (ibid.). But she didn't mind such aberrations as she had also blindly loved and supported him for his unwavering devotion to science and India.

The insightful knowledge of the truth that there is a dichotomy between the spiritual life and the worldly life is hard earned. When established in the Reality, the unreality of phenomenal world is a killjoy to such. Swamiji was a diehard sannyasi. Wherever he stayed he proved he was different by the air he carried in his personality. Lust and lucre were edgeless to him, unlike to a householder. In view of his firm commitment to monasticism, he kept his conscience clear and upright openly repeating: 'Let me die a true Sannyasin as my Master did, heedless of money, of women, and of fame.'<sup>25</sup> Everyone in his company had glimpses of his distinctive reclusive nature—in the midst of the world but not of the world. His deep yearning for god was matched by his deportment of detachment and indifference to sense enjoyments. In a word, his monastic disposition was profound and palpable. One who caught the tenor of his life would immediately learn he was stationed on a plain not reachable to worldly people at all. But then, he had a divine mission to fulfil. He was meticulously doing it in a manner exclusive to him. His method, since it is essentially spiritual, takes much maturity for one to understand, even for one who is extremely scholarly. It doesn't become intelligible in a trice without having some spiritual knowledge. Not to miss the point and get convinced by it is of course an arduous task.

Every word he uttered to Nivedita was to shield her from gratuitous influence that was likely to hamper her spiritual quest. For instance, with a view to protecting her, he told sometime in March 1899 'as long as you go on mixing with that [Tagore] family Margot I must go on

sounding this gong. Remember that that family has poured a flood of erotic venom over Bengal.<sup>26</sup> Describing some of their poetry and indicating himself, who was once close to them and still visited them, he said: 'But a man who left his own *mother* could not be tempted like that—and just you remember—if you long for the flesh pots of Egypt—my mission is not Ramakrishna's nor Vedanta's—nor anything but simply to bring MANHOOD to this people' (ibid.). Nivedita replied, 'I'll help you Swami.' 'I know it' he said—'And so I beat the alarm' (ibid.).

Swamiji was apprehensive she would be carried away by their sophistry, and would eventually look down upon the cause for which she followed him challengingly all the way from England. Therefore, whenever opportunity came he reminded her plainly thus, sometimes speaking even more roundly calling a spade a spade without mincing words. He could never imagine a disastrous consequence descending on her because of frivolity. As she reposed faith in him, so he did in her, being mutually responsible for one another from their well-defined individual positions and points of view. Swamiji fortified her, neutralising the external threats which might derail her from her spiritual purpose. He knew a sequestered life was an unrealistic proposition for her protection. He imposed on her, accordingly, some sort of discipline in intellectual terms suited to her nature. She felt this in her heart of heart before long. Her allegiance to her Master was therefore unassailable and legendary. She weathered many a storm to maintain it all her life. Swamiji chiselled and modelled her originality by dint of his spiritual acumen, and then set her free to work for his mission in her own way, considering her very special among his disciples. She subsequently trod the paths hitherto unbeaten and translated her Master's ideas of nation building

into action at the cost of her own life, in the era of national struggle.

Thereafter, in a short while, Swamiji left for his second visit to the West accompanied by Nivedita and his brother disciple Swami Turiyananda. Initially, he was a little hesitant to travel with Nivedita, suspecting it could attract social criticism. But Nivedita was determined not to miss the opportunity of being in Swamiji's proximity during the journey. It was so covetable to her since she was dying to talk, listen, and learn from him, as well as to closely watch his various intellectual and spiritual moods. On 13 July 1899 she wrote to Miss Macleod from the ship:

He told me how he had thought in Calcutta over the question of my travelling with him, and had decided not—but circumstances had been too much for him and he had given in, without speaking. But I told him how I consulted the Parkers, and I think he never gave it a thought again. I would not have missed this voyage for the world you know Yum, and there is nothing disagreeable about it. No doubt there are people who disapprove of us all, but there is not one who dare show it overtly, and one man who looked at Swami in a way I did not like, I would not speak to for 2 days (1.178–9).

(To be continued)

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# BALABODHA

*Ancient Wisdom Made Easy*

## Karma

INDIAN PHILOSOPHY IS REplete with the usage of the word ‘karma’. Therefore, it is imperative to understand the meaning and implications of this term. This is a Sanskrit word. Sanskrit is a classical language like Greek, Latin, and Persian. And in Sanskrit, as in most classical languages, most words are derived from a stem or root.

The word ‘karma’ is derived from the root *kri*, which means ‘to do’. ‘Karma’ means any action that one does. Eating, walking, sleeping, studying, working—all these and any other action can be termed ‘karma’. This word also means the effects of actions. The effects of an action can also be called *karmaphala* but generally the word ‘karma’ is used.

The rituals prescribed by the Vedas or *dharmashastras* are also called ‘karma’. That is why the portion of the Vedas that discuss the rituals is called *karma-kanda*. In Sanskrit grammar, ‘karma’ denotes the object in a sentence and is associated with the accusative case or *dvitiya vibhakti*. For instance, in the sentence, ‘Rama goes to school’, school is the object or ‘karma’.

‘Karma’ as used in the sense of the effect of an action is a much discussed concept. Many Indian faith traditions believe in this concept. According to this concept, one has to reap the fruits of whatever actions one does, across various lifetimes. Till a person has the idea of ‘I am doing this’ or ‘I am experiencing this’, she or he will have to face the results of all actions. The idea of ‘I am doing this’ is called *kartritva*, doership

and that of ‘I am experiencing this’ is called *bhoktritva*, enjoyership. However, this means that whatever one experiences is the result of one’s own actions and not because of some unseen destiny or fate. So, if one wants to change one’s life, one can do it.

Based on when the effects of one’s actions give result, they are classified into three kinds: *sanchita*, *agami*, and *prarabdha*. The results of actions that have been stored across lifetimes and will eventually start taking effect in some future lifetime is called *sanchita*, stored. They are likened to the bunch of arrows an archer has in the quiver and one of those arrows will eventually be shot some time. The result of actions that are about to take effect from the next lifetime are called *agami*, forthcoming. They are likened to the arrow that an archer has strung on the bow and is about to shoot. The results of actions that have already started to take effect in the present lifetime are called *prarabdha*. They are likened to the arrow that has been shot by the archer.

So, the karma theory comes as a saving grace. If one is facing bad experiences because of bad actions done in the past, one can get good experiences by doing good actions. And if one has to stop producing karma, results of actions, one has to give up the sense of doership and enjoyership.

Doing work completely selflessly, with no sense of doership or enjoyership is called Karma Yoga.

PB



# TRADITIONAL TALES

## *The Strange Throne of Vikramaditya*

**L**ONG AGO, the city of Ujjaini was famous for its art and culture. It produced great talents like Kalidasa. King Vikramaditya ruled Ujjaini with righteousness, justice, and great affection for his people. He intently looked at disputing parties approaching him for a resolution and frightened by his look, the culprits would themselves admit their guilt.

The people greatly loved and respected King Vikramaditya. Time swept away the glory of his rule. Green grass grew where once stood his palace. Boys from nearby villages grazed their cattle and played there.

One day, a boy spotted a mound on the meadow and sat on it. Then, moving his cattle-prod, he said authoritatively: 'Now I am the judge here! All of you bring your cases to me.' The other boys saw this as a new game. Hence, they created small quarrels among themselves and brought their cases to the 'judge' boy.

A boy acted as humbly saying: 'Honourable judge! He is quarrelling with me. You have to carefully examine the case and give a proper judgement.' The boy-judge heard the case and started thinking. He looked intently at the two boys involved in the case. Then, he gave a lengthy judgement in carefully measured words in a sombre voice as an experienced judge. While giving the judgement his expression and words were not suited to his age. The other boys were surprised at this. However, they continued their game in this manner with several cases that day.

Then onwards, the boys joyfully played this 'judge' game daily. Even though they were playing for passing time, the boy-judge's method

of investigation and his way of speaking while giving the judgements surprised everyone. The boy-judge behaved like the other boys till he sat upon the mound. After sitting on the mound and starting to judge the cases, the boy-judge's looks, speech, and actions would completely change. He would behave like one with great thinking and scholarship. He judged the playful quarrels among the boys just as one judges big cases of adults. This news spread among the people among the nearby villages.

In time, villagers brought their real cases to the boy-judge, who delivered proper judgements after climbing the mound. Both parties felt that the boy-judge's judgement was the most appropriate. This news eventually reached the king, who one day told in jest to his ministers: 'Probably that boy sits on Vikramaditya's judgement-throne.' The ministers thought that this playful statement of the king could be true and said to him: 'O king! On the very place, where the boy-judge sits now, once stood King Vikramaditya's castles and courts. The king ordered: 'Then, dig that place and find out what lies beneath the mound.'

As a result, the beautiful meadow was dug up and turned into a ground full of mounds and pits. As the meadow was destroyed, the boys were sad that they could not graze their cattle there. But, the boy-judge used to cry seeing the mound and suffered with agony as if his very life was being taken.

After not getting anything after digging up all other places, the royal workers started digging the mound. The boy-judge started shedding torrents

of tears as he silently watched the place where the mound was. With the digging up of the mound, a black marble slab-like structure came out. That slab was being held by the statuettes of twenty-five goddesses. The statuettes were holding the slab in their hands with their wings spread and were facing up at the sky, ready to fly.

That black marble slab was Vikramaditya's judgement-seat. People gathered around and were very happy to see it and carried it to the king's palace with great joy and *éclat*. The king ordered that the judgement-seat be kept in a special spot in his courtroom. The king prayed and fasted for three days, performed all necessary rituals, and prepared to sit on the judgement-seat. All ministers, courtiers, and soldiers were eager to see the king sit on the judgement-seat.

The king solemnly saluted everyone. Then, he went near the judgement-seat and after saluting it, was about to sit on it. Suddenly, one of the twenty-five goddesses holding the judgement-seat looked at the king and said: 'O king! Stop! Don't sit on the judgement-seat of King Vikramaditya!'

Everyone was shocked. The king looked at the goddess in shock and wonder. The goddess told the king: 'Just think whether you are eligible to sit on this judgement-seat. Have you not desired to usurp the kingdoms belonging to other kings?' This question brought a kind of light in the king's heart and he was reminded of his old deeds. He said almost to himself: 'Yes, I have wanted to capture kingdoms not belonging to me; I have also captured some.' After thinking for a long time, he accepted his condition with bowed head: 'No, I am not eligible to sit on Vikramaditya's judgement-seat.' The goddess replied: 'You fast and pray for another three days. Then come with a pure mind and the eligibility to sit on this judgement-seat.' Saying this, the goddess flew towards the sky. Listening to the goddess's words, the king looked at the

judgement-seat and saw that the goddess's place had become vacant.

The king prayed and fasted for another three days and was about to sit on Vikramaditya's judgement seat with great devotion, when another goddess spoke: 'Stop! Don't sit! Have you not desired to grab others' wealth?' The king said: 'I have robbed others' wealth.' The goddess replied: 'Then, you are ineligible to sit on this throne. You come again after praying and fasting for three more days.' Saying this, the goddess flew away. Thus, one by one, twenty-four goddesses flew away. The king prayed and fasted according to their desires and eventually conquered evil qualities like lust, anger, pride, and jealousy and finally one day proceeded to sit on the judgement-seat.

With a much lesser ego, the king thought: 'Now that I have given up my evil qualities, let me see if I have become eligible to sit on this judgement-seat; surely I will sit on Vikramaditya's seat today.' However, he was afraid of the possibility of some bad quality left in his mind.

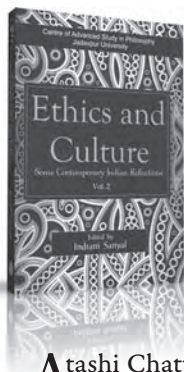
When he saluted the throne and was about to sit on it, the remaining twenty-fifth goddess asked: 'Stop, O king! Do you have a completely pure mind as that of the cowherd boy? Are you free from the notions of "I" and "mine"?' Shocked, the king retreated: 'No, I am completely ineligible to sit on this throne.' The next moment, the goddess flew away, taking the judgement-seat with her.

The king thought: 'I fasted and gradually improved and became free from evil qualities. Yet, I did not get the pure mind of the boy. I am not free from the pride of "I", "mine", and "king". Education and talents are useless for granting justice. One should remove mental impurities, likes, dislikes, desires, and anger.' The king's pride was destroyed and he decided to attain a pure mind at least in the future in order to maintain justice.



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## **Ethics and Culture: Some Contemporary Indian Reflections Vol. 2**

Edited by Indrani Sanyal

DK Printworld (P) Ltd, F-395, Sudarshan Park, Near ESI Hospital New Delhi 110 015. [www.dkprintworld.com](http://www.dkprintworld.com). 2016. 265 pp. HB. ₹ 750. ISBN 9788170174530.

Atashi Chatterjee Sinha's essay (60–89) in this collection is one of the best essays on not merely Benoy Kumar Sarkar's hermeneutics of Asian cosmopolitanism but also on Hinduism and the Vedas: '*Rta* is the rhythm of Being. *It is* Being ... Hindu metaphysics presupposes that behind what we experience as the world there is a fundamental order, unity, design, rhythm, rule, system, harmony or organization. There is a profound mingling, of *Rta*, the concept of *eka* (one), this (*idam*) and *atman-Brahman* (self-Being) which originated in the early Hindu scriptures' (73–4).

Chatterjee Sinha discusses the Rigveda in the quoted lines and she does her cultural work by connecting *Rita* with both 'the Chinese notion of *tao*' and 'the Greek notion of *logos*' (74). Chatterjee Sinha shines as a historian of ideas. She traces the history of the term 'logos'. Scholars and students of philosophy, the humanities, and even biblical studies will do well to read her on logos than scour the Internet or refer to obscure tomes for understanding the meaning of logos. Without understanding the meaning of logos one would hardly understand the humanities and the social sciences today, leave alone philosophy.

To understand ethics and culture, it is important to understand logos since it is the Thomist 'unmovable mover'. It is logos which has defined till date all philosophy, both Western and Eastern, with the exceptions of Buddhist and Jain metaphysics. Yet Buddhist and Jain polemicists

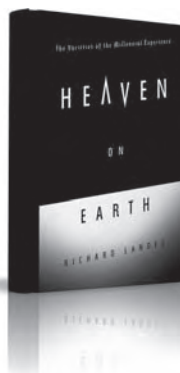
attack logos as do those who have not carefully read Western epistemologies and ontologies. If one sits through seminars in the humanities and philosophy then one understands why Chatterjee Sinha has effected the impossible in her brilliant essay. This reviewer has not found a clearer definition of logos anywhere else. While Christian thinkers and Swami Swahananda of the Ramakrishna Mission had connected the logos with Om and the Word that was made Flesh—see the first verse of *The Gospel of John*—in both writing and in speeches, none before Chatterjee Sinha had connected logos with *tao* and *maat*. This is original, non-speculative philosophising. The logos, according to Jacques Derrida who has been misunderstood and misread, never slips. The meaning of logos slips and that is understandable since logos is the Hegelian 'Man-Nature or Mind-Matter unity' (74).

The book under review has other thought-provoking essays by scholars and Ratna Dutta Sharma's essay (137–66) on the relationship of Rabindranath Tagore's father, Devendranath Tagore with the *Upanishads* will be of importance to Tagore scholars. Appendices I and II of this book are helpful since they list eminent Indian philosophers, both living and dead. Indrani Sanyal has done a good job in editing this book.

*Subhasis Chattopadhyay*

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## **Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience**

Richard Landes

Oxford University Press, Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP, UK. [www.oup.com](http://www.oup.com). 2011. 520 pp. HB. \$38.95. ISBN 9780199753598.



White supremacists including the historian Niall Ferguson (b.1964), the singer Steve Hofmeyr (b.1964) want the African continent to be a failed democracy. Afrikaners are readying for the day when whites in South Africa's metropolises will run to the hinterlands of South Africa for shelter. Many Afrikaners are convinced that doomsday is at hand, albeit, to be brought about by South Africa's black majority. (See Benjamin Zand, 'Afrikaners on the Edge', *Our World*, BBC, 17 September 2016).

In early 2016 Turkey witnessed one of its goriest coup attempts fuelled by Fethullah Gülen (b.1941). And India is reeling from suicide as explained in 'Suicide Terrorism' in the book under review (462–3) and other terrorist attacks including the one in Uri, Kashmir in September 2016. The ISIS shows no signs of letting up. All of these extremist movements are fuelled by millennialist ideologies. From the paranoid Afrikaner in his hinterland hideout to Abu Musab al-Barnawi, the present leader of Boko Haram, now incorporated into the ISIS, to the ISIS lone-wolves throughout the globe as discussed in 'Internet Jihad' (464), the popularity of 'execution videos' and to Pakistan's ISI handlers controlling suicide bombers in India; each of them believes that their actions will finally win them heaven (430–7). This desire for 'heaven on earth' needs to be studied to understand and end genocides. There are two ways to understand this deadly phenomenon of millennialism—one through literature and the other through meticulous historiography.

Haruki Murakami in his *Underground* (2000) and *1Q84* (2011) and Stephen King in his *The Stand* (1978) and *Revival* (2014) show the disastrous consequences of millennial or fundamentalist movements. Both know that neuroses and the need for certainties—Kantian categorical imperatives—lead to disasters.

Haruki Murakami's texts provide us with the literary perspective required for comprehending millennial frenzy. Murakami has recorded the religious cult Aum Shinrikyo's 1995 Tokyo subway gas attack in his *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche* (2000). The gassing was fuelled by millennialism. Later Murakami studies the millennial, cultic mindset in

his *1Q84*. Richard Landes's book is the historical counterpart of Murakami's literary oeuvre. Landes constructs a historical matrix needed to understand our desire for utopias on earth from the ancient Egyptians till date in 'Imperial Millennialism' (149–84). Landes's study of millennial longings is matched only by Richard Slotkin's work on American exceptionalism. If one studies Murakami, Slotkin, and Landes synoptically then one understands how all utopias have as their inevitable telos, dystopic Orwellian worlds. Landes's book under review performs its cultural work by making explicit the *raison d'être* for the existence of all sorts of cults and fanatics who believe that our/their time of reckoning is very near.

This history of absurdity is Landes's subject. Landes's magisterial history of the ideas of millennialism is indispensable to understand. For example, the ideological framework which helps ISIS gnaw away at Kantian categorical imperatives and thus casually annihilate ethnic groups like the Yazidis. World leaders, international studies' experts, and even fundamentalists will benefit from reading the fourteenth chapter, 'Enraged Millennialism' (421–66). Landes identifies seven themes (433–5) which 'now play a central role in this current round of Muslim apocalyptic discourse' (433). This discourse is not different from the Nazi discourse about the Jews. Whereas the Nazis thought that Jews 'secretly controlled the world', Muslim apocalyptic writers think that Jews 'openly control the world' (455). Footnotes are not redundant if they are properly inserted within the main text. Richard Slotkin's trilogy on American exceptionalism has copious and relevant footnotes that lead to other avenues of scholarship. They also prevent the need to constantly turn pages to look for endnotes. Every single footnote of Landes's book is an eye-opener. See Landes's footnote 136 on page 449 for understanding how contemporary Islam dreamt of ruling the world after the US and the erstwhile USSR's demise.

The French Revolution (1789–99) is the Western world's classic example where a utopia turned into a dystopia. The French Revolution is taught with a lot of gusto. Landes's threadbare study of it in the ninth chapter, 'Democratic

Millennialism' (250–87) is historiography at its best. The French Revolution is what Landes calls 'a *progressive demotic millennial* movement'; dangerous since it was 'inspired by a desire to *perfect the world* through *egalitarian* ideals', which sought to 'legislate the just society' (250). Instead of a just society, we had butchery matched only by the English Puritan Interregnum's determination to silence all dissent. This period in English history was another millennialist and disastrous *phantasy*.

That Hitler's genocide is unique has been proven by Susan Neiman (b.1955) in *Evil in Modern Thought* (New Jersey: Princeton University, 2002) and by Sir Ian Kershaw (b.1943) in his research on the Nazis. The collusion between Christianity and the Nazis too have been documented, but not Hitler's own religiosity. Landes breaks new ground when he speaks of 'Hitler's religiosity', which 'continues to constitute a major problem for historians' since most 'tend to view Hitler through a secular prism' (365). Landes has contextualised Hitler's rise and reign within the discourse of millennialist religious bigotry. Landes rightly questions among other issues Hannah Arendt's (1906–75) 'a priori' dismissal of 'any link between Nazism and Christianity' (366). Landes's 'Ariosophy and the Occult Origins of Nazism' (367–9) is an original contribution to Holocaust Studies. 'Genocidal Millennialism: Nazi Paranoia' (353–88) should be read alongside the works of Susan Neiman. Neiman's understanding of Nazi genocide from her Kantian, neo-Enlightenment position is found to be empirically robust by Landes's research. Within genocide and Holocaust studies, both Neiman's and Landes's works along with the work of Bashabi Fraser (1954–) are cautionary and we ignore them at the cost of letting 'Post-modern Millennialism' (391–466) once again produce another Hitler, a cruel parody of Nietzsche's 'Übermensch'.

Landes's book will be remembered as a cautionary work since millennial frenzies are not disappearing anytime soon. As Slotkin makes explicit Cormac McCarthy and Larry McMurtry, Landes makes explicit Murakami and King.

Subhashis Chattopadhyay



### **The Gita: A New Translation of Hindu Sacred Scripture**

Translated and Introduced by  
Irina N Gajjar

Axios Press, PO Box 118, Mount Jackson, VA 22842, USA. 2007. xviii + 313 pp. PB. \$12. ISBN 9780975366288.

One more translation of the Gita is not unwelcome, and Dr Stefan Thomke's adulatory foreword is understandable as he has known the translator since he was fifteen. And what does the preface by Dr Irina N Gajjar say? 'Like the Sanskrit original, *The Gita* is written in blank verse' (xiv). While her translation is more a free verse rendering, the original Sanskrit is in classic *anush-tup* metre with four verses of eight syllables each. Further on, Gajjar's feminist pen tends to confuse the reader no end.

'Feminine and masculine pronouns have been used interchangeably as have the words man and woman. In the Sanskrit, the term "man" and the masculine are used generically to represent the human race. The mission of this work has been to reincarnate the Gita as an English work using English structure. Only in this way can the beauty, depth and logic of the Sanskrit original survive translation. (ibid.)'

Well, I never! I have scores of English translations before me including Swami Swarupananda's which was first published by the Advaita Ashrama in 1909. Very famous translators, whose knowledge of the source and target languages was impeccable, like B G Tilak and Sri Aurobindo did not find the work male-centric. Again, Gajjar's own translation is far from being accurate. *Tapah* becomes 'suffering', not austerity! (253). And the Lord's *rupa* is always conveyed as 'four armed form' (205). The same unease clouds us when we seek the original in the translation. Uncalled for additions and disturbing deletions leave a sour taste. With her firm adherence to the Aryan Invasion Theory that stands rejected, she makes herself suspect as a researcher as well.

Prema Nandakumar

Researcher and Literary Critic  
Srirangam

# MANANA

**Exploring thought-currents from around the world.  
Extracts from a thought-provoking book every month.**

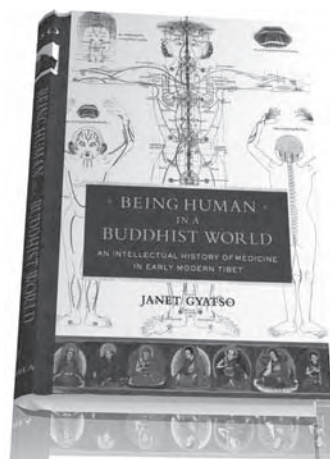
***Being Human In A Buddhist World:  
An Intellectual History of Medicine  
in Early Modern Tibet***

Janet Gyatso

Columbia University Press, 61 West 62 Street, New York, NY 10023. 2015. xi + 519 pp. \$55. HB. ISBN 9780231164962.

THIS BOOK STUDIES how knowledge changes. What enables epistemic shift, and what constrains it? How do historians recognize such a shift? If it is not a full rupture with the past, how should we weigh the relative import of continuity and difference? What impact do conceptual loyalties have on the possibility of new thought, or the articulation of unique and particular experience? Do norms function differently when they are enshrined in writing and when they are construed by the senses? Under what circumstances may norms be jettisoned? What role do deference, prestige, and rhetoric have in the formation of knowledge? And what work is done by the cachet of alterity and resistance?

In plumbing the annals of academic medicine in Tibet, this book seeks to account for double movements. It studies how medical learning, a mix of the main Asian health-care systems of its day, fostered a probative attitude to religious authority, even as it grew to maturity within the great institutions of Tibetan Buddhism. Yet medicine remained deeply informed by religious cosmologies, in ways that both facilitated and inhibited scientific thinking. Tibetan medical scholars both drew on and held at bay their religious heritage. In so doing, they sought how best to attend to the everyday ills of their patients, on principles legible and credible in a Buddhist world.



This project ponders key issues for the history of science, including the disjunctions—and conjunctions—between scientific approaches to knowledge and religious ones. It studies moments when learned physicians set aside revealed scripture in favor of what they observed in the natural world. It finds medical theorists resisting ideal system of any pedigree, and endeavoring instead to account for idiosyncrasy and unpredictability. They relied most of all on traditions of medical knowledge from the larger world around them. But they adapted a range of methods and concepts developed in Buddhist context as well—from epistemology to ethical discourse to meditative visualization—in novel ways that could inform scientific aims. They also did so in order to account for aspects of human embodiment that are not determined by material conditions alone. This book studies the methodological self-consciousness that allowed certain leading medical theorists to intentionally mix disparate streams of thought and practice. That meant confronting, in unprecedented ways, the possibility that the Buddha's dispensation did not encompass everything that needed to be known for human well-being.


Tibetan religion, particularly the philosophies and practices of Buddhism, has received much scholarly attention in the last century. But there has been little recognition of knowledge



traditions in Tibet that were not primarily religious in nature. This book seeks to correct the imbalance by studying an outstanding example of alterity in Tibetan intellectual and cultural history. Medicine in Tibet underwent a major transformation at the same time that Buddhism itself was entering and becoming domesticated there, from the seventh through the twelfth century, coming into its own in the early modern period, and culminating during the rule of the Ganden Podrang government in the seventeenth to eighteenth century. But medicine had different roots. Although early Indian Buddhism had fostered palliative care and reflected knowledge of human physiology, the Tibetan tradition of Sowa Rikpa drew most centrally on the full-service medical treatises of Indian Ayurveda, Galenic and Islamic medical conceptions from western Asia, Chinese medicine, and other old strands of knowledge on the Tibetan plateau. Medicine in Tibet did indeed grow, like Buddhism, into a highly scholastic tradition, producing an estimable body of historical and commentarial literature of its own. It was also influenced by concepts and ideals in the Buddhist literature being translated from Indic languages and then composed in Tibetan during the same period. The classical medical text in Tibet, the *Four Treatises*, even takes the exceptional step of framing itself as a teaching originally preached by the Buddha in his form as Bhaiṣajyaguru, the 'Medicine Buddha'. But Tibetan medicine continued to operate out of an explicitly worldly ethos and a distinctive sense of the empirical grounds for knowledge, and often adapted what it was taking from Buddhist heritages in novel ways suited for medical science. This makes for a fascinating and instructive history. Given the overwhelming hegemony of Buddhist knowledge systems in Tibet—and in spite of many moves to keep medicine under the purview of

the Buddha's teachings—the gestures that medicine managed in the direction of autonomy are no less than astonishing. The vignettes explored in this book thus have a lot to tell us about what it takes for knowledge to recast its foundations, on conceptual and rhetorical registers alike.

Among the many sites of both engagements and disjuncture between Tibetan medicine and Buddhist formations is the esoteric branch of Buddhism often called *tantra*. Its contribution to everyday medicine is among the several interests of this book. In general, tantra represents a medieval development across Indian religions that produced some of the most outlandish practices, cosmologies, and mythologies in Asian history. This was so for tantra's Buddhist forms too. Yet tantric literature also describes the human body in considerable detail. While modern scholars have long puzzled over its transgressive sexual and violent practices or tried to penetrate the religious import of its theories of embodiment, this project studies another dimension of tantra's significance, that which was of interest to physicians. Several of the ensuing chapters follow medical thinkers as they work through tantric anatomical and physiological categories, arguing about whether they should be taken literally or figuratively and finding ways that the insights of an arcane spiritual tradition might sometimes be useful for their purposes.

The project takes as its starting point the period of the 'Great Fifth' Dalai Lama, who consolidated the Tibetan state in the seventeenth century. The Dalai Lama's new government was itself deeply grounded in a tantric Buddhist worldview. That already tells us a lot about the political stakes in medicine's assessment of traditional Buddhist knowledge. The book begins with the brilliant regent Desi Sangyé Gyatso, protégé of the Great Fifth, who endeavored to lift up medicine with state patronage. 

# REPORTS



Seminars at Mysuru

## New Mission Centre

A sub-centre of Ramakrishna Mission, directly under the supervision of the Headquarters, has been started at Burdwan. Its address is 'Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Bajepuratappur, Katwa Road, Burdwan, West Bengal 713 101', email: <burdwan@rkmm.org>. Swami Suhitananda, General Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated the sub-centre on 25 September 2016.

## News of Branch Centres

Viveka, one day National Seminar for UG and PG students was conducted on 11 March 2017 at **Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE)**, Mysuru, attended by 170 students from different degree colleges and PG centres. Mr Ravi D Channanavar, Superintendent of Police, Mysuru, was the chief guest of the inaugural function. Speeches were given by Swami Bodhamayananda, Director, Vivekananda Institute of Human Excellence, Hyderabad, Prof. K Raghothama Rao, Director, MANAS, Centre for Training and Development, Bengaluru, and Dr R Balasubramanyam, Chairman, Vivekananda Youth Movement, Mysuru.

## Celebration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Sister Nivedita

**Chennai Math** held a drama on Sister Nivedita and released a DVD containing a hari-katha, discourse intermingled with songs on her on 11 September 2016. **Hyderabad** centre conducted a special lecture on 9 September which was attended by about 600 teachers. **Jalpaiguri** centre held a public meeting on 4 September at Farabari in Jalpaiguri district, which was attended

by 550 people. **Kadapa** centre held a workshop for teachers from 9 to 11 September in which 70 teachers participated. **Port Blair** centre held a youth convention on 28 August in which about 100 students took part. **Vadodara** centre conducted a youth convention on 18 September which was attended by 100 youths.

The following centres conducted cultural competitions: **Mekhliganj**: 16 September, 24 students from 3 schools participated; **Ootacamund**: 27 August, 683 students from 27 schools participated; **Pune**: August, about 1,000 students from 43 schools participated; **Salem**: from 26 August to 2 September, 1,956 students from 32 schools participated; **Sarisha**: 25 September, 4,976 students from 216 schools participated.

One Day National Seminar for UG and PG College Girls, Ananya—Empowering the Women and Strengthening the Nation, was conducted by **Ramakrishna Institute of Moral and Spiritual Education (RIMSE)**, Mysuru on 18 March 2017, attended by around 150 girls from different colleges. UNO's Youth Voice Award winner Ms Ashwini Angadi was the chief guest of the function. Speeches were given by Mataji Vivekamayi, President, Bhavatarini Ashrama, Bengaluru, Kum. Poshini B T, a social activist, and Smt Chayaa Nanjappa, a woman entrepreneur. The chief guest of the valedictory function was Ms Netra, Senior Associate, Buhler India Pvt Ltd.

## Values Education and Youth Programmes

**Bengaluru Math** held two spiritual retreats, one for college girls and another for college boys, on 11 and 18 September 2016 in which altogether 1,550 students participated.

**Delhi** centre conducted 41 values education

workshops at different parts of India for school teachers and principals from July to September which were attended by 2,882 people in all.

**Madurai Math** conducted a personality development camp on 10 September in which 282 students from a college in Madurai took part.

**Mangaluru** centre conducted three values education seminars on 1, 2, and 3 September for postgraduate students, college lecturers, and engineering students respectively. In all, about 1,250 people participated in the seminars.

**Salem Ashrama** conducted three values education programmes at three colleges in and around Salem in September which were attended by 579 students in all.

**Vadodara** centre held eight values education programmes at different educational institutions in Gujarat in August and September attended by altogether 1,545 students. Another programme for parents of students was held at a school in Vadodara on 20 August attended by 150 people.

### **Swachchha Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India Campaign)**

Chepauk railway station in Chennai was cleaned on 22 September by 100 students and staff of **Chennai Students' Home** polytechnic. The students also campaigned for cleanliness.

**Coimbatore Mission** centre conducted five cleaning programmes in September in which the students cleaned premises of government offices, a hospital, and a public road.

About 400 students, staff, and monastic members of **Narottam Nagar** centre took part in cleanliness drives on 28 and 30 August, and 3 September by cleaning nearby residential areas.

**Rahara** centre held speeches, competitions, and cultural programmes on cleanliness from 8 to 13 August in which about 2,800 students and staff of the centre's different institutions participated.

**Vadodara** centre conducted a public meeting

on 28 September in which about 100 people took a pledge for a clean India. Besides, films on cleanliness were screened in the meeting.

### **Relief**

**Fire Relief: Assam:** From 27 to 29 August, Karimganj centre distributed 21 saris, 51 dhotis, 14 packets of biscuits, 21 utensil sets, and 55 blankets among 41 families affected by an accidental fire at Charbazar area in Karimganj district.

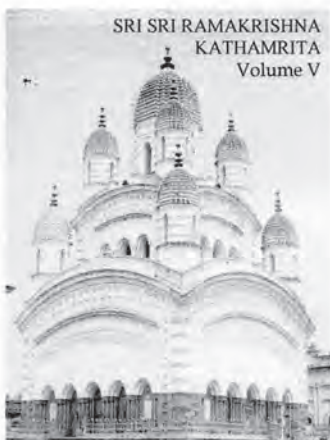
**Distress Relief:** The following centres distributed various items, shown against their names, to needy people: (a) **Asansol:** 75 saris and 25 lungis on 18 September. (b) **Coimbatore Mission:** 2,804 shirts, 167 T-shirts, 2,493 tops, 4,281 pants, and 19 flatknits from 26 July to 27 August. (c) **Cooch Behar:** 332 dhotis, 54 saris, 25 kg milk powder, and 25 kg cornflakes on 14 and 21 August. (d) **Jalpaiguri:** 400 saris and 400 plates on 25 September. (e) **Koyilandy:** 3,404 shirts and 1,702 pants from 7 to 22 June. (f) **Manasadwip:** 4,887 shirts and 2,064 pants from 30 July to 15 September. (g) **Narottam Nagar:** 50 bicycles on 4 September. (h) **Rajarhat Bishnupur:** 266 saris, 59 dhotis, and 43 lungis from 1 to 7 July. (i) **Sarisha:** 850 shirts and 619 pants from 31 July to 31 August. (j) **Shillong:** 101 shirts, 515 pants, 100 T-shirts, 141 sweaters, 96 jackets, 1,251 tops, and 381 ladies garments from 8 July to 26 September.

**Drought Rehabilitation: Maharashtra:** The water conservation project by **Pune** centre at Shiur village, Ahmednagar district was completed on 18 September. The project involved dredging of 2.5 km stretch of the river Kanadi to help mitigating the problem of water scarcity faced by the village.

**Flood Rehabilitation: Tamil Nadu: Chennai Students' Home** handed over 14 newly built low-cost houses to poor flood-affected families of Kanchivoyal village in Thiruvallur district on 24 September.







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## Practical Hints on Spiritual Life

**Swami Vireswarananda**

(Tenth President, Ramakrishna Math & Ramakrishna Mission)

- Spiritual practice is nothing but a struggle to attain that state which takes us beyond all suffering. All troubles arise because we have identified ourselves with the external world. Detachment from the external world will not come to us unless we are convinced that the world outside is transitory and is not lasting. Without effort, without struggle, no grace will come – that is certain.
- Control of the mind is not attained in a day or two. That we do not get meditation easily and that it is very difficult and hard to practice is not our experience only, but also of great souls like Arjuna. Sri Krishna assures us that the mind can be controlled through constant practice (*Abhyasa*) and dispassion (*Vairagya*). It is desire that makes the mind restless and consequently you do not get concentration. Renounce these desires through discrimination (*Vichara*) and purify your mind and you will get good concentration. *Vairagya* is dispassion from sense enjoyments. We have to discriminate and give up all desires that are lurking in our minds. It is these desires that create trouble in the mind.
- As regards *japa*, the more you do the better. But then, there is no use repeating the *mantra* mechanically a large number of times. Instead, if you repeat it devotedly and with great fervour a limited number of times, it is better. Devotion and fervour is what is important and not the number. There is no limit for *japa*. The more *japa* you make the quicker will be your spiritual progress.
- The mind is within the sphere of matter and has its ebb and flow like the river. So when your mind tends to become depressed or you find your mind is not in the normal mood, pray to Sri Ramakrishna to remove this mood from your mind and He will help.
- Try to do your household duties in a spirit of worship. Try to see Sri Ramakrishna in every member of your family and serve them by performing your duties to them. This will not distract your mind and when you sit for meditation you will find it pretty easy.
- In worldly life there will always be vexatious problems but depend upon Sri Ramakrishna and they would be solved by Him and you will have nothing to worry about them. Perform all your duties as ordained by Sri Sri Thakur and offer everything to Him and be at peace. Do all your duties on His behalf and leave the result to Him.
- Surrender yourself to Sri Sri Thakur and rely on Him. He will do all that is necessary for your good. So, be at peace and repeat His name. Keep on doing your spiritual practices regularly and pray to Thakur for devotion. He will grant you pure devotion at His Lotus Feet. May Sri Sri Thakur be ever gracious to you all is my earnest prayer to Him.



[ Taken from "Swami Vireswarananda—A Divine Life",

General Editor : Swami Chaitanyananda,

English Editor : Swami Satyamayananda,

Swami Vireswarananda Smriti Committee, Belur Math, Howrah, Revised Edition : 2015, pages 291-293, 316 ]

....

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Therefore, taking the future into consideration the need is to earmark the sliding zones and build strong retaining walls.

For this purpose, the estimated cost will be approximately 30 lakh rupees. We appeal to all devotees to please donate generously towards this venture. May Thakur Maa Swamiji shower their choicest blessings on each one of you.

This is my heartfelt prayer.

Yours in the lord

**Swami Sarvatmananda**  
Secretary

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*Mankind ought to be taught that religions are but the varied expressions of THE RELIGION, which is Oneness, so that each may choose the path that suits him best.*

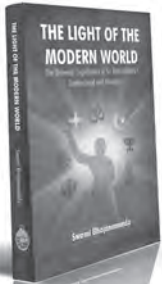
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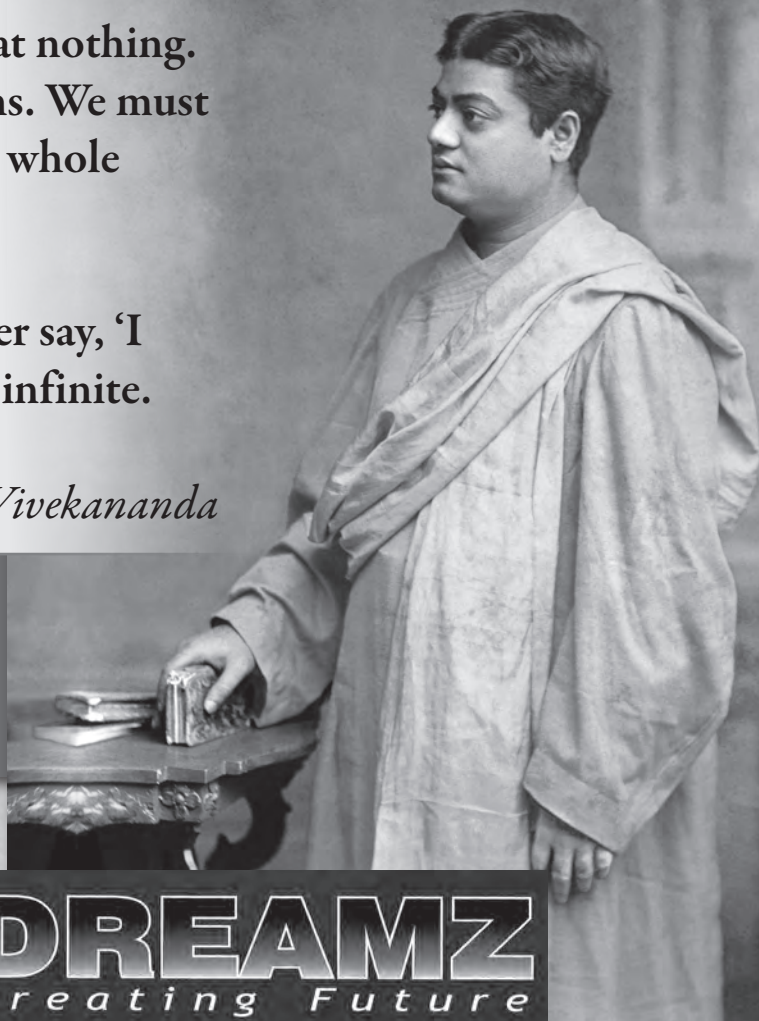
Each soul is potentially divine.  
The goal is to manifest this  
Divinity within.

Strength is life, weakness is  
death.

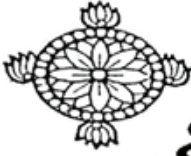
Fear nothing, stop at nothing.  
You will be like lions. We must  
rouse India and the whole  
world.

Never say, 'No', never say, 'I  
cannot', for you are infinite.

—*Swami Vivekananda*



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you, have nothing to do with it.

—Swami Vivekananda

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